

THE CONTROL OF THE MASS MEDIA IN AUSTRALIA

An Investigatory-Descriptive Study

by

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This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no copy or paraphrase of material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis,

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SUMMARY

Controls over the mass media are effective insofar as they facilitate the achievement of the goals of the organization and the needs of the people associated with it. They are imposed in five areas, the organization, the audience, the sources, the advertisers and the legal. Apart from the last mentioned area, most controls are informal and not even regarded as controls. The most basic organizational control for example is the praise or promotion of workers who produce material consonant with the style and expectations of their superiors. This produces a body of people, particularly in the higher echelons who do not need to be instructed over frequently as to the nature of the product preferred by the owners or directors.

The legal controls exist primarily in the laws against defamation, obscenity, blasphemy and sedition and in the various provisions regarding contempt of court. The Customs Regulations affect the mass media only in their concerns with imported magazines and imported film for television. The Posts and Telegraph Act applies restrictions on material sent through the mail and as most daily newspapers are registered as periodicals to be sent through the mails they come under additional restrictions here. One of the few legal restraints which exists solely in regard to the mass media is the D notice system under which information which could be prejudicial to the defence of Australia is prohibited from being used on or in any mass medium.

The press is not controlled to the same extent by Government legislation as are the electronic media and they appear to be more subject to controls by tradition and by a more formal organization structure. In all but one case (Consolidated Press, which recently sold its sole daily paper) the media monopolies are based on newspaper holdings, for initially the Government favoured the applications for television licences of those with experience in the media field.

Both the Government instrumentalities, the A.B.C. and the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, have been hindered in their operations and development by Government interference in areas which should have been the concern solely of the body itself. Now that most radio and television licences have been allocated, the main concern of the



Control Board seems to be with ensuring that programmes do not offend 'good taste' and that a certain amount of good children's, religious and educational programmes are broadcast. Commercial radio and television are controlled by the Control Board, desire to make a profit and the belief, of varying degrees of intensity, that they are performing a community service.

A case study of Southern Tasmania examines the day-to-day operations of various media in a restricted area in an attempt to find more about the undocumented controls. Finally it is concluded that the main factor common to all controls over the mass media in Australia is fear, of public relations, of superior's displeasure, of losing money or office, of offending foreign powers or influential people, and a fear of the effects that the mass media may have.

## INTRODUCTION

Apart from local gossip and rumour, and facts about people and things known to us or received in face-to-face communication, all the information we receive about the world, its peoples and problems, comes to us through various media, and of these the most important are the mass media of newspapers, radio and television. These are essential in the working of a modern democracy for they are the means whereby the electors can become aware of the actions of their representatives, the issues confronting them and the operation of the whole democratic process. Thus, if the mass media are not working efficiently and effectively and the electors are ill-informed or only partially informed, then the democratic process itself is impaired. Of course no paper, let alone radio or television station, not even The New York Times, can print all the news that's fit to print, but the news sections of the media are usually aware of the special nature of the service they provide and attempt to fulfil it as they see fit.

Because of their role in the democratic process and because of the importance of the media in the daily lives of so many people, examination of their activities is a valuable, even necessary, practice. Considerable research has been carried out into the effect various media have on their audiences, but not so much has been done into the effect of various people, laws and organizations on the mass media itself. It is this control over the mass media that will be the concern of this thesis. The word 'control' is not used pejoratively, for some controls are necessary to ensure that the media work effectively and that they do not harm or mis-inform the public.

The type of control under examination is both external and internal, imposed by law and imposed by management, formal and informal, acknowledged and unwitting, in fact anything which might be likely to affect the content, nature and availability of the media. One major concern is with the extent of Government control by law, regulation, investigatory committees, statutory bodies and by unofficial influence. Other controls, such as those exerted by the owners/directors of the media monopolies, are less open to research and

comment on this is sometimes reduced to speculation. With regard to the various official and semi-official bodies ranging from the Australian Broadcasting Control Board to the broadcasting and television federations, both the influence they exert and the influence exerted on them, will be examined.

The thesis is primarily descriptive and investigatory. As well as discovering what kind of controls over the mass media exist in Australia, it attempts to find how effective they are, how they developed and if possible, why they exist. Finally, a suggestion is made as to the factor held in common by all the various controls causing both their existence and effectiveness, or otherwise. When the common factor is missing or present in only limited degrees, the effectiveness of the control seems to be lessened.

The study begins with an examination of such theory as was available on the control of the mass media and posits general types of control that are likely to be found within the organization, the audience, the sources, the advertisers and in the legal field. This is followed by a chapter on legal controls such as the laws against defamation, obscenity, blasphemy and sedition and the censorship provisions insofar as they affect the mass media. The chapter on the Press, which is next, includes an examination of the attitudes of some of the more important of the media owners, of the gatekeeper concept developed by Kurt Lewin and of the Australian Journalists Association. Following this is a chapter on the Australian Broadcasting Commission dealing with its development and relations with the Government. Chapters on commercial radio and commercial television are preceded by a study of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, its development and operations. The last chapter is a case study of the various media in Southern Tasmania, an attempt both to see how the controls previously mentioned would apply in practice and to discover how the more informal day-to-day controls, that would not be documented, operated. The thesis ends by examining what appears to be the common thread connecting all controls.

Although the area under consideration is Australia and at times specifically Southern Tasmania, parallels are sometimes drawn with, and

examples and even theories taken from, both the British and American situations. Thus the B.B.C. is mentioned particularly in connection with the A.B.C., while some of the theories on the operation of newspapers comes from American research. The time actually covered by the thesis extends back to the settlement of Australia, but the main period dealt with is from the Thirties to the present. This is because this period saw the establishment of both the A.B.C. and the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, as well as the major development of commercial radio and television. Because of the constantly changing situation studied, certain passages of the study have had to be dated, as the information, although accurate as far as could be ascertained at the time, may well have changed since.

The case study was a limited one both geographically and in the actual media studied. There is only one daily newspaper in Southern Tasmania, only one commercial television station and only two commercial radio stations. Apart from the latter, the A.B.C. provides the only competition and this is not seen as such by the executives of the commercial operations. There is no afternoon paper although the Melbourne Herald has a significant sale for an interstate paper. Thus although the controls discussed in the main section can be applied in the case study to some extent, the application of the case study to the wider scene is of doubtful validity. It could possibly be viable in the larger non-capital cities, but as the situation in these places does not appear to have been studied, a comparison is not possible without on-the-spot research.

For the case study, a major source of information was interviews with media people and with those working for the Australian Broadcasting Control Board. These people also supplied me in many cases with unpublished studies and documents in their possession which were often useful in the main body of the work as well. In the main body of the study, apart from the sources just mentioned, I have had to rely heavily on the various Government publications such as Parliamentary Reports (by Joint, Standing and Select Committees), the Debates on the various broadcasting and television bills and the Australian Broadcasting

Control Board Reports. Acts such as the Posts and Telegraph Act, the Broadcasting and Television Act and those concerned with sedition, blasphemy, obscenity and defamation also provided essential information. Apart from Henry Mayer's The Press in Australia, other published material on the media in Australia is either outdated or concerned with the effects of the media among the community or particular segments of it.

CHAPTER 1General Theory

The process of mass communications is most often described by use of Lasswell's formula "Who says what through which channel to whom with what effect", but this model is not sufficient for the concerns of this thesis as it makes no allowance for factors influencing the who, the what and the channels. The concept 'what effect' may involve an amount of feedback to any or all of the preceding components, but this is only one of the pressures to which the early parts of the communications process are subject. The communications model I will be using therefore is one adapted from Bruce H. Westley and Malcolm S. MacLean's<sup>1</sup> which will allow for various external factors to influence all parts of the communications process. As well, this model is effective for both face-to-face communications and those of the mass media and also permits non-purposive communication.

The basic elements of the model are a communicator (A), a receiver (B), a channel (C) and objects of orientation (Xs). For the purposes of this model only, the channel is conceived of not as a particular inanimate medium such as a newspaper, nor as the path which communication habitually takes within an organization, but as the media organization itself and more specifically as the people working within it to facilitate the movement of a message to B. (A is intentionally omitted from this statement as although frequently the message is from A to B via C, non-purposive messages are also transmitted.) The objects of orientation are similar to Newcomb's discriminative stimulus

"which is a stimulus that is arbitrarily, symbolically, associated with some thing (or state, event or property) and that enables the stimulated organism to discriminate this thing from others"<sup>2</sup> This latter term will continue to be used as the former may seem to imply solely material objects whereas many messages are about abstracts such as attitudes beliefs and hopes. Countless numbers of these stimuli exist in the world of each person who may choose to communicate something about one

or more of them to another person in face-to-face communication or to a large number of people through the mass media. Simple purposive face-to-face communication occurs when A transmits a message consisting of shared symbols to B about a discriminative stimulus X. Usually the communicator will receive some feedback - be it by words, gestures or expressions - from the receiver and may modify his subsequent messages accordingly.

However, this is not the only form of communication which exists and which is covered by the model. As Newcomb says

"it is an almost constant human necessity to orient oneself toward objects in the environment and also towards other persons oriented towards those same objects"<sup>3</sup>

Both these can be examples of non-purposive communication (B receiving information about Xs in the absence of A) and both can lead to mass communication, for when the objects in the environment and/or the other persons are distant from B and face-to-face communication becomes difficult or impossible, use of the C, the channel, becomes necessary. It is the role of the channel to select Xs, transform them into symbols of meaning shared with B and transmit these symbols to B. Thus the channel makes available events, peoples and beliefs otherwise inaccessible to B, or as Westley and MasLean say

"the effect of the addition of the C role is to provide B with a more extended environment"<sup>4</sup>

B, the receiver, needing as already mentioned, almost constantly to orient himself to objects and people, chooses both channels and discriminative stimuli for similar reasons. The requirement for orientation arises from a basic desire to maximise need satisfactions and solve security problems and this occurs even in the absence of both A and C. Consequently a channel will survive insofar as it satisfies B's needs, and this explains the importance of feedback in the form of continuing to buy the same papers and magazines or products advertised in specific media and in the form of public opinion polls, market research and letters to the editor.

The concern of this thesis is primarily with the forces which act upon the C in his choice among Xs and As and A-X relationships to transmit to his audience some of which arise out of consumer feedback just mentioned, but others of which are not allowed for in the generalized model used,

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although they can all be classified under need satisfaction and problem solution terms. It does however demand extending the range of these two terms from referring solely to the audience B. The needs and problems of the members of the organization within which C operates, of the As he reports, of the environment within which he, and frequently both the A and B, exist, all influence C's choice and it is these factors that will be examined.

There are two major problems of media organizations which affect C's decision and both arise from the nature of the raw material with which he works, be it news or entertainment. Within certain limitations to be discussed later, this raw material must be novel, exciting and unexpected, but it is characteristic of organizations that they prefer their raw material as standardized as possible because in this form it is easiest to handle and exceptional cases rarely occur. To deal with this problem, the organization imposes certain rigid practical requirements such as deadlines, limited newsspace, strict timetables and house styles, all of which force the unpredictable to conform to certain standards. The effects of these on C's decisions can be manifold - as final deadlines approach and most of the newspaper is set, an item of news must be particularly important to be included, or again as deadline approaches and most of a programme contains items of a particular type, an item unimportant but of a different category will be accepted to give variety to the whole, or a series of television programmes will not be screened or even bought because they do not fit the time space available.

The other main problem is related to this and arises also from a basic division in the media organization unlike those found in other organizations. Similar to many industries, the operation of a newspaper or a television or radio station is a serial one, the raw material passes through various stages in its passage to the consumer and each process is dependent on the previous one. However in this instance there is a distinct break into two sections which may be termed the creative and the productive. A piece of news will be acquired by the journalist (frequently following the direction of the Chief of Staff), written up, passed to a copy taster or straight to a news editor and if accepted passed to a sub-editor. During these stages



all the work is concentrated on the message, but when it is passed to the printing section this ceases and work is concentrated on preparing the message for transmission. In the same way a programme idea is worked on as a message from the idea to the final script and then the break occurs when it is formed into a transmissible entity. Generally the constraints applied to the raw material, mentioned in the preceding paragraph, are to hold these two sections together, to force onto the indefinite creative section some of the definite limitations which are inherent in the production/transmission section. Of course, this leads to conflict; a programme producer may be told an idea is not technically possible, or a news editor demand that an event has occurred of such import that the presses must be stopped, the different groups belong to different unions and may see their demands as inimical. All this again affects C's decision on the message which is transmitted.

These are the first sources of tension within the organization, but others exist. It is the nature of most media to consist of three parts, information, entertainment and advertising. This composition varies between media with newspapers having much more information than entertainment and television the reverse, and for the state-run services, the advertising element is absent. As the needs and goals of these components differ, they come into conflict which can be better discussed as between revenue and non-revenue goals. This latter is simply a term used to cover a number of goals unconnected with revenue such as service to the organization and the public, the gaining of personal prestige and recognition and possibly the promotion of favoured views or beliefs. Excepting for the moment state-run media, revenue is obtained through advertising and for newspapers and magazines, through circulation. The audience response nature of circulation for newspapers is paralleled by audience research and ratings for the electronic media which have to know about and appeal to their audiences to sell them to the revenue supplying advertisers. Jeremy Tunstall sees three goals of news organizations - advertising revenue, audience revenue and non-revenue - and he applies these respectively to the commercial executives, news processors (editorial staff) and newsgatherers (journalists)<sup>5</sup>. This may be applied more generally to the mass media and its components.

The difficulty is with the creative entertainment staff in the electronic media for they are concerned with both the audience revenue and non-revenue goals. Commercial executives in all fields are concerned with advertising, the journalists with information and the news processors and most of the creative electronic media staff, especially for commercial stations, with entertainment. For the purposes of the rest of this discussion, Tunstall's terms will continue to be used and generally the entertainers be considered to be holding to an audience revenue goal though this is related to its being a compromise goal as mentioned later.

As it may be claimed that controls are effective insofar as they facilitate the achievements of the goals of the organization or the individuals in it, further examination of these goals is necessary. The non-revenue goal pursued primarily by newsgatherers is also important to processors and executive staff for its element of prestige and social legitimacy and even the owners/publishers may have non-revenue goals such as specific political or charitable promotions. For the newsgatherer, goal achievement involves getting his stories into the medium, edited as little, and in as prominent a position, as possible, as well as getting scoops or more comprehensive or more sensational information than his colleagues or competitors. For the processors and executive staff, non-revenue goal achievement may involve the acquisition or continued employment of star journalists, a reputation as a responsible medium, the agreement of important or popular people to appear only in their medium.

There is constant conflict between advertising revenue goals and non-revenue goals because increased space allocation for advertising results in decreased space for news (and vice versa), and frequently news that gatherers want prominently placed for their goal achievement is contrary to the happy buying atmosphere within which the advertisers wish to place their copy. There is great resentment among gatherers at the attempts of advertisers to have various 'puffs' placed as editorial copy. As the audience is important to both newsgatherers and advertisers neither of whom can achieve their goals in its absence, there is acceptance by all parts of the media organization on the importance of the audience revenue goal, though means of achieving it, of maximizing the

media's appeal, differ. The audience revenue goal can also be used in a legitimizing sense, for example 'giving the public what it wants' can be a powerful defence against charges of sensationalism and triviality. Because of the importance of this latter goal, the goals of the audience become important, after all, as has been previously pointed out, channels survive while they satisfy receivers. The audience requires its need satisfied and its problems about security solved and these apply even more strongly to the individuals in the media organization. Thus it is valuable to examine an outline of the basic needs of the individual.

Douglas McGregor<sup>6</sup> posits a system of five types of needs, the first of which are physiological and not important in relation to the mass media for if rest, exercise, shelter and protection from the elements (the basic physiological needs) are absent there is unlikely to be any interest in anything else. Secondly, there are safety needs involving protection from danger, threat and deprivation, again these are not important with regard to the mass media, though for individuals in the organization, the threat of loss of employment can be a potent drive and for all people knowledge of danger (of fire or of war for example) can be carried by the media which thus becomes increasingly important. Thirdly come social needs. These include the need to belong to something, for acceptance by one's fellows, for giving and receiving friendship and love. Here the mass media becomes important not only because one belongs to a group of newspaper readers or specific programme watchers, but because sharing of common experiences - if only by report - is an important part of acceptance by one's fellows. The fourth type is egoistic needs, possibly the most important for the mass media for they include both self esteem and reputation. Self esteem demands knowledge as well as self confidence and achievement and this is a powerful supporting argument for the newsgatherers in their attempts to maximise the information content of their medium. Finally there are the self fulfilment needs

"the needs for realizing one's own potentialities, for continued self development, for being creative in the broadest sense of that term"<sup>7</sup>

These naturally apply more to the individuals in the organization than

to the audience, for the satisfaction of the latter's needs for self-fulfilment are unlikely to come from the mass media.

This outline of needs does not allow for the desire of the audience to be entertained and the large part of all media which is not at all concerned with information. Gerhart Wiebe, in an article which attempts to explain the great popularity of trivial and sensational media messages, differentiates between three types of media message. The first type is directive, requiring learning and behavioural changes and as Wiebe believes that these occur only in face-to-face communication, he dismisses this type and turns to the second type which he terms maintenance, into which category he would place most of the information of the media. These messages<sup>B</sup> review or elaborate on existing knowledge and interests and even a news programme is placed in this category because items which cover totally unfamiliar situations are not heeded. The third category is restorative media messages and this includes most of the entertainment content as well as being the explanation given for Wiebe's original problem. They include the violent, the unreal and wish-fulfilment messages, as Wiebe says, they

"are those with which the individual refreshes himself from the strain of adapting, the weariness of conforming. They provide an interim for the reasserting of impulse"<sup>8</sup>

These elements can be seen again in news broadcasts with the emphasis on violence and sensationalism and they may act cathartically to release amounts of hostility and violence within the audience in a socially acceptable way. Thus restorative messages may solve problems of strain and repression and media messages as a whole may solve other problems, for instance by selecting from the maze of information, particular messages to pass to the receiver to minimise his confusion and insecurity.

In examining more closely the types of control over the mass media, a five-fold division will be used: organizational, audience, sources, advertisers and legal. In this scheme, the organizational controls are those exercised by both bosses and peers within the media organization and they are operative largely within the system of the individual's needs already outlined. Thus the basic control over the individual by his superior is the threat of deprivation of employment and he will therefore obey direct dictates to ensure

continued employment. This is rather a crude type of control however and cannot wholly explain, for instance the house style of a newspaper or the coherence of a television programme consisting of segments from different individuals or teams. These can also be explained in terms of social and egoistic needs, for acceptance and for achievement and recognition. A person will achieve recognition, praise and advancement only insofar as he produces that which pleases his superiors and consciously or unconsciously he will learn precisely what pleases them, what styles and attitudes they value and increase his output of this type of material. Types of articles, scripts and camera shots which are cut, not used or received without comment, will cease to appear unless the individual finds that these are very important to him, for his self-esteem, in which case there will be conflict within the individual over need priorities which may be resolved by compromise or by seeking a more supportive environment. If, however, the individual is receiving a lot of support for his activities, attitudes or approaches from his peers he may find this sufficient fulfilment of social and egoistic needs for him to continue to produce work which fails to conform to the desires of his superiors. In this case more direct action will have to be taken to control the individual's output unless editorial directives are adjusted to meet it.

The second control is that exercised by the audience and remembering that the audience revenue goal is the compromise goal accepted by all parts of the media organization, this is important, despite the fact that members of the audience rarely feel that they have any control over the messages they are offered. This is because it is not the audience itself which controls, but the picture of the audience, its needs and wishes, held by the people working in the channel that is powerful. A product that will not sell, be watched or listened to has no future even within state run media organizations which are not dependent on audience revenue. One has to justify ones operations and in the absence of an audience there is no justification for the transmission of a message. Audience research work is very important in this area and a programme, correspondent or series of articles may be dropped, altered or promoted according to the findings of a survey. Restorative messages continue to be provided in great quantity

because their ratings are high despite frequent statements by concerned people that violent programmes are harmful to the community, that undesirable social habits are being fostered by the media.

One type of control that appears to be a composite organizational and audience type is that which decides whether a piece of information is or is not 'news'. The organization will know, though rarely can its members express, what is news and this concept will be learnt by the process of reinforcement of correct decisions already mentioned and it will consider items to be news because they satisfy the requirements of the audience. Although newspapermen are unable to formula a description of what makes a piece of information news or not news, nor even how they rank items in terms of 'news-ness', some research work has been done on the subject, primarily in Norway.

Probably the most important of this is that by Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge<sup>9</sup> who propose various factors which are operative in the news decision and who develop some hypotheses about the relationships between them. The first factor is frequency, the periodicity of the event. Ideally the news event will occur in the period between editions, usually 24 hours, though for radio news bulletins an even shorter frequency is desired and hence possibly their emphasis on accidents and other almost instant occurrences. An event which happens slowly over a long time cannot be considered news until something happens in connection with it at a frequency more congruent to the news bulletins' appearance. Thus a dam's being built is not news, but its opening, or an accident occurring on it, will be. The second factor they term threshold, this they relate to the size of the event which either has to be big enough or change in size sufficiently to call attention to itself as a newsworthy event. The third factor is concerned with ambiguity, for<sup>a</sup>clear, relatively uncomplicated issue is likely to be noticed more than an ambiguous one. The fourth factor is meaningfulness both in terms of cultural proximity and of relevance to the audience. Thus Australian news broadcasts carry much about the United Kingdom but only become interested in Vietnam when American and more particularly Australian troops/advisers become involved.

The next two factors seem at first to be contradictory for they are

consonance and unexpectedness, but the unexpected is only within the field of what is consonant, of what is reasonably expected or even demanded. The two remaining factors are not so much concerned with audience expectations, but rather with the operation of the newsroom. Firstly there is the continuity factor which decrees that once an event is declared news it will be considered such even though it no longer satisfies all the factors it did originally. Secondly there is the composition factor - this means taking into account the other news received and choosing items to give variety to a news bulletin or newspaper.

Following these general factors, Galtung and Holmboe Ruge posit four culturally based factors important to the north-western part of the world but also, due to cultural similarity, to the Australian situation. These factors are the importance of elite nations, elite people, personification and negativity.<sup>10</sup> Personification is important as people like to identify with news stories and they can do this most easily when the stories are actually about people and their activities as human beings (rather than as political or organizational representatives). There can be no doubt about the incidence of negative news as there are frequent complaints about the absence of 'nice, happy' events being reported, but examination of the eight previously mentioned general news factors shows that negative events are far more likely to fulfil these requirements than positive ones. They usually happen over a shorter time span (for example accidents as opposed to achievement of goals), are less ambiguous and are unexpected within a consonant field. Both negativity and personification can be seen as elements of sensationalism which, despite the frequent attacks upon it, is an important aspect of audience satisfaction.

The next type of control is that exercised by news sources, and will be dealt with in two parts: individuals (and individual organizations) and agencies. The latter are placed in this category although many of the factors influencing media organization influence them and they can easily be considered news organizations, because for most media organization, an agency is a source to be treated similarly to other sources. The same recurring supply situation that applies to the media applies to the agencies. They survive insofar as they provide the various media with what they want

and consequently the news they provide is not raw, but has been already roughly tailored to the demands of each individual medium, or to a geographic area, or to a specific chain of papers and/or television stations. A factor controlling agency news, and even more strongly controlling dispatches from overseas correspondents, is the cost of cable messages which are higher from some areas than others and generally results in a smaller flow of news from underdeveloped, poor or unimportant nations together with a larger flow from the richer, more developed nations (this of course is connected with the news of elite nations factor mentioned previously).

Individuals or individual organizations can have a degree of control as sources only if they are, or are likely to be, permanent or long term, or highly important short term, sources. The one-time-only source is most unlikely to have much control over what appears, but a more frequently used source can use the threat of withdrawal of information. This becomes particularly important when the source is also an advertiser or a potential advertiser in or on the media. Tunstall develops a hypothesis which reads

"The greater the element of non-revenue goal, the more autonomy will the newsgatherer have in relation to his news sources, the greater the element of revenue goal, the more will the newsgatherer be under the control of his news sources"<sup>11</sup>

Although news gatherers in general hold to the non-revenue goal, some specialist correspondents and some types of news have varying amounts of advertising revenue connected with them and all have audience revenue implications. A motoring correspondent must be aware of the large amount of advertising revenue which is gained from vehicle manufacturers and this is likely to affect his comments, assessments and news. The recent concern about the objectivity of motoring correspondents who are offered gifts and free junkets during the promotion of a new car, touched only lightly on the importance of such advertising to the media. In 1968 the national advertising expenditure on motor vehicles and accessories was over twelve and a half million dollars.<sup>12</sup> The same is true of fashion news. Sports correspondents depend heavily on their sources, particularly with regard to horse racing and football and as these are very much in the audience revenue gathering area, this supports Tunstall's hypothesis.



A problem which arises with this hypothesis is the consideration of political correspondents who cannot, unless they are particularly important or influential, afford to displease too greatly their sources especially when those sources are actual politicians. A simple refusal to give information, or even to see a particular newsgatherer will severely hinder the newsgathering process. However, the politician-source must always be careful that the newsgatherer does not turn to opposition members for information or to rivals within his own party, so perhaps — this minimises the amount of control political sources have over newsgatherers. It will be remembered that Prime Minister McMahon has refused to be interviewed by certain ABC reporters, but such is his need for appearing on the ABC that although he has control over who interviews him, his only other control is a refusal to answer questions (if he has been unable to vet the questions before the programme) and these are very negative controls. To make positive statements, he must make press statements which can be ignored, cut or highlighted according to the wishes of the newsgatherers or their bosses, or speeches to the nation — which cannot be too frequent or they lose impact. Other more minor politicians and officials have less control (unless they are more adroit). Altogether, there is an air of mutual dependence between newsgatherers and their more regular sources and control seems to grow out of a bargaining situation which may be variable depending on whether the newsgatherer's need for information is greater than the source's for publicity or vice versa.

A very different type of control exercised by sources is unconscious and applies mostly in the case of the electronic media. An example is the case mentioned by Philip Elliott of a television documentary programme on the nature of prejudice.<sup>13</sup> The final content of the programme was influenced considerably by the sources albeit unwittingly for the producer had to rely on people known to him or to his team for the interview sections and in the panel discussion people were chosen for abilities not strictly relevant to the subject or their knowledge of it, such as their skill at being provocative. This could also apply to radio programmes and although not so much to news, would affect feature articles in newspapers. The expert who is asked to comment on occurrences, discoveries and the like generally

is a person known to the journalists or programme producer or introduced by a predecessor and through his accessibility or experience may be able to promote his own views.

One aspect of the control of the advertiser has already been dealt with, this is the case when the advertiser is also a source of news either quite legitimately - details of a new car or of fashionable shoes can be very interesting news to many people - or on the occasions when advertisements, very thinly disguised as copy, are insinuated or an attempt is made to insinuate them, into the editorial space of the paper, or the programme content of the electronic media. Apart from getting as much free publicity as possible, the advertisers main concern is with placing his advertisements in surroundings conducive to their being bought. Particular advertisers may try to influence a medium's policy in ways unrelated to selling and dependent on the importance of their account to the overall media budget, may be effective. For instance, some small town papers claim to continue to carry church news despite its low audience appeal, because comparatively large advertisers are devout churchmen and appreciate its appearance. On a larger scale, for some time the reports of cigarette smoking received little publicity in the more popular media because of the great importance of cigarette advertising to the media as a whole. It is still apparently difficult for much news on consumer affairs to gain significant circulation. There are times when the media attempts to control advertising, though usually this is simply a matter of refusing to use copy felt to be tasteless or contrary to the style of the medium although in the early days of Vogue Australia there were many attempts on the part of the management to obtain advertising copy of a standard closer to that of the magazine and eventually a more sophisticated form of material was obtained. It is possible to draw somewhat of a comparison between the efforts of advertisers to control the commercial media and the government and its departments' attempts to control criticism of themselves on the state run media. The latter are probably more successful because they generally have more than just a financial control but they are not invariably successful vide the criticism of the Post Office on TDT recently respite directives that it was not to be screened.

The final type of control is covered by the term legal and consists both of controls contained in Acts of Parliament and of those exercised by regulatory bodies both from within the media industry and outside it. It seems the more recent the introduction of a medium, the more likely the government is to impose controls on its operation and ownership. The converse also appears true - that the older the media is, the more successful it will be at combatting legislative interference. Thus the only Australian laws directly affecting newspapers in peacetime are the various defamation and obscenity Acts (some states have attempted indirect legislation such as requiring the registration of newsagents) which apply to so much more than the press, but there is a substantial Act covering the electronic media which is by no means primarily concerned with the operation of the ABC and the Australian Broadcasting Control Board. Whether this situation has arisen because governments have the opportunity to legislate with regard to practices which are about to be started, and lacked the opportunity with newspapers (or forfeited it in the face of cries about the freedom of the press), or whether it fears the greater persuasive power of the newer media, is unsure, but either in response to government action or arising from the same cause, there are more, and stronger, self-regulatory bodies concerned with the electronic media as well.

In the following chapters (with the exception of chapters 2 and 5) it will be seen how these types of control apply to various media, how they are enforced and how circumvented or ignored.

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12. Alan Hancock & Margaret MacCallum: Mass Communication: Australia and the World, Longmans, Camberwell, 1971. p.9.
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Chapter 2LEGAL INHIBITIONS

Probably the most explicit control over the mass media in Australia is that imposed by the various laws against obscenity, blasphemy, sedition and defamation and those upholding parliamentary privilege and imposing 'D' notices. These controls can be read, they can be seen to be applied, one can point to an instance of censorship and say "that is a control over the mass media". Yet there are still a number of problems over the exact interpretation of obscenity, of defamation and of blasphemy. (The less controversial laws covering broadcasting and television will be discussed in later chapters).

Not only are there problems of interpretation, but there are also problems about which body, Federal or State, is to deal with the matter under consideration. Defamation is a state concern, parliamentary privilege is the concern of each parliament itself and 'D' notices are Federal matters, but obscenity, blasphemy and sedition, those factors most prevalent in discussions of censorship, are the concern of a number of bodies.

In this thesis, I am concerned with censorship of newspapers, magazines and television film and not with the more commonly discussed books and films. Material imported into Australia, and this includes magazines designed and written in Australia but printed in Hong Kong or Singapore, is the concern of the Department of Customs and Excise. This power is derived from the provision of the Customs Act allowing the Minister to prohibit the importation of articles either absolutely or conditionally. The regulation governing the importation of books and magazines is the Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulation 4A which deals with "Blasphemous, indecent or obscene" works or articles and those which "unduly emphasise matters of sex, horror, violence or crime or are likely to encourage depravity"<sup>1</sup>. Film censorship is governed by the Customs (Cinematograph Films) regulations which control the registration of films and order that they will not be registered if they are

"a) Blasphemous, indecent or obscene;

b) likely to be injurious to morality or to encourage or incite to crime;

- c) likely to be offensive to the people of a friendly nation or to people of a part of the Queen's dominions; or
- d) depict any matter the exhibition of which is undesirable in the public interest."<sup>2</sup>

Works which have been released by the Customs Department may still be subject to state laws, although by agreement all film censorship is left to the Commonwealth and an agreement made in 1967 stated that in relation to works of literary, artistic or scientific merit both State and Commonwealth authorities would seek the advice of the National Literature Board of Review. This Board is composed of nine members, three of whom are representatives of the states and it works in operative divisions of four people, but decisions are not binding either on the Customs Minister or on the states. It can only make decisions on works which are referred to it by other bodies. If someone in the Customs and Excise Department decides that a work is pornographic, the National Board simply does not have any opportunity to make a decision. With material referred to it by the Commonwealth Minister, the Board's decision will affect the release or prohibition of the work in question, but with the material from the states its effect is on the decision by the relevant authority whether or not to proceed with prosecution.

The Customs Department has developed its own definition of pornography, which presumably would decide whether or not a problematic case would be referred to the National Board. The definition reads

"Verbal or pictorial publications devote<sup>d</sup> overwhelmingly to the explicit depiction of sexual activities in gross detail with neither acceptable supporting purpose, or theme, nor redeeming features of literary or artistic merit".<sup>3</sup>

In an interview in June 1972, the Minister, Don Chipp, claimed that the emphasis in censorship had changed from a tendency to deprave and corrupt (known as Hicklin's test) to a concern with whether it will cause excessive offense.<sup>4</sup> This has arisen not only because of the greater ease of determining the latter, but also through an acceptance by the department that there exists a plurality of community standards. It is possibly this point that has caused discussion of the possibility of introducing an "R" certificate for books restricting them from being sold to people under 18 and

also in some versions of the projected legislation restricting them from being publically displayed.

Separate sections of the Customs and Excise Department deal with literature and films. The Commonwealth Film Censorship Board is concerned with television as well as with film for cinemas and in its judgements on the former use the Television Programme Standards published by the Australian Broadcasting Control Board and discussed later. Television programmes made in Australia are not submitted to this check but are expected to comply with the standards. The problem of television screening of Australian-made feature films which, not being imported are neither censored or rated (into G,A, or AO classes) by the Customs Department, was dealt with in the Eighth Annual Report of the Broadcasting Control Board which declared that all such films, unless they were news and actuality or educational or religious, had to be submitted to the licensee of the station proposing to televise them for him to censor according to the regulations of the Board and to rate in a manner similar to imported films. If the Control Board is dissatisfied with an Australian television film, it may reprimand the station, national or commercial, which programmed it, but cannot prosecute either the Commission or the licensee without the written consent of the Postmaster-General.<sup>5</sup> The Australian Broadcasting Control Board Annual Report for 1971-72 said that most censorship of television films had been for violence, and that while 3 films had been rejected outright under the Customs Regulations a further 51 were considered unsuitable for television<sup>6</sup>.

Further censorship powers are given to the Commonwealth under the Posts and Telegraphs Act and as some copies of nearly every newspaper and magazine are sent by mail, the provisions of this Act are particularly important in regard to media control. The interpretation of terms preceding the main body of the Act includes a definition of the term "indecent or obscene matter" which states that it

"includes any drawing or picture or advertisement or any written or printed matter in the nature of an advertisement if it relates to venereal or contagious diseases affecting the generative organs or functions or to nervous debility or other complaint or infirmity arising from or relating to sexual impotence or intercourse or sexual abuse or to

pregnancy or to any irregularity or obstruction of the female system or to the treatment of any complaint or condition peculiar to females or may reasonably be construed as relating to any illegal medical treatment or illegal operation".<sup>7</sup>

The power of the Postmaster-General over newspapers rests firstly on the provision (Sec.29(1)) whereby newspapers sent by post may be registered (and thereby sent more cheaply) but may lose their registration if a posted copy of that newspaper is found to contain indecent or obscene matter. This provision will influence the compilers of registered newspapers such that there will be certain material that will always be excluded from their publications. Publishers of unregistered newspapers and magazines are not however free to send whatever type of material they like through the mail, for subsection 3 of the same section (29) states

"any Director may refuse to transmit or deliver any issue of a publication if such issue contains indecent or obscene matter"<sup>8</sup>

While subsection 4 states

"Any posted newspaper found to contain indecent or obscene matter may be destroyed by order of the Postmaster-General."<sup>8</sup>

Other sections of the Act prohibit the posting of articles

"On the outside of which any profane blasphem<sup>o</sup><sub>us</sub> indecent obscene or offensive or libellous matter is written or drawn" (Sec.40d)

and permit their destruction (Sec.43), while section 44 deals with the power of the Postmaster-General or Director to refuse to transmit or deliver a newspaper packet or parcel containing any indecent or obscene matter and to destroy it if he wishes. This form of censorship does not affect all newspapers or magazines to the extent of altering their contents, although the larger circulation dailies would certainly be affected, but individual publishers may decide that they would rather stop sending their publications by post than alter their contents. This situation leads to the anomaly frequently pointed out where a publication which cannot be sent through the mails because it contains indecent or obscene matter, is being sold at a



newspaper stand in the foyer or vestibule of a post office.

The legislation dealing with blasphem<sup>o</sup>us, obscene and seditious publications in the states varies greatly, with three states (Qld, N.S.W. and Tas.) having bureaucratic procedures for dealing with such publications as well as procedures for prosecution in the courts, while the other three states have only the latter. Although the laws vary, practical examples will be drawn largely from the Tasmanian legislation in order to give a better background for the later case study.

In all states it is a common law misdemeanour to publish an obscene book (or other similar work) whether for gain or not. In Queensland, West - ern Australia and Tasmania, this offence has been included in the Criminal Code, but in all states the definition of 'obscene' is left to the courts. Sawyer gives a definition of obscenity that has developed in these cases as

"a writing dealing with the sexual or excretory organs or functions in such a manner as to arouse feelings of sexual excitement or disgust in the reader. It is possible that a publication which deliberately attacks accepted standards on sexual matters, without having the emotive character mentioned above, is also obscene, but no work has actually been convicted on this ground alone."<sup>9</sup>

Sawyer also adds that it is a possible defence that the publication is a technical one with a circulation primarily among members of that trade or profession (for example, medical texts) and that the literary merit and type of a publication may also be taken into account.<sup>10</sup>

Section 138 of the Tasmanian Criminal Code Act 1924 deals with obscene publications saying

"(1) Any person who knowing, or having a reasonable opportunity of knowing, the nature thereof -

(a) publicly sells or exposes for public sale, or to view, or distributes to the public, any obscene book or other printed or written matter, or any picture, photograph, model or other object tending to corrupt morals; or

(b) publicly exhibits any disgusting object or indecent show, is guilty of a crime.

Charge: Publishing (or exhibiting) obscene matter.

(2) In any prosecution for a crime under this section it shall be a defence to prove that the act alleged was done for the public good"<sup>11</sup>

All states also have statutes which make the publication of obscene or indecent matter a summary offence. In Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania the statutes are the Police Offences Acts, in N.S.W. the Obscene and Indecent Publications Act, in Queensland the Vagrants, Gaming and other offences Act and in Western Australia the Indecent Publication Acts. Queensland and Tasmania have also enacted legislation designed primarily to establish Boards of Review, but which extend the common law definition of obscenity (as do the laws mentioned above for all other states except Western Australia) to cover horror, crime and violence and probably by a decision in N.S.W. in 1964 in *John Calder (Publications) Ltd. v. Powell* to classify as obscene writings advocating the illegal use of drugs.<sup>12\*</sup>

Both the Victorian and the N.S.W. statutes include two characteristics of obscenity: Hicklin's test (the tendency to deprave and corrupt) and "undue emphasis" of sex, crimes of violence, gross cruelty or horror. In 1954 and 1955, a further control over magazines (and other printed material apart from registered newspapers which are similarly covered by the Posts and Telegraphs Act) was introduced into the N.S.W. Obscene and Indecent Publications Act and the Victorian Police Offences Act providing that all publishers and distributors of printed matter would have to be registered and if a successful prosecution for publishing or exhibiting

\* A sidelight of the control of writings about drugs was reported in mid 1971 when the Attorney-General of Tasmania was considering implementing legislation similar to recent amendments to the New Zealand Narcotics Act with regard to the suppression of information on the misuse of drugs as referred to in the Report of the Senate Select Committee on Drug Trafficking and Drug Abuse. The amendments mentioned provided that the name of any narcotic referred to in court proceedings may be prohibited from being published for five years after the date on which the proceedings end. In this way it was hoped to stop people from copying the often bizarre misuse of drugs which could be read about in the newspapers.<sup>13</sup>

obscene matter was brought against them, they would lose their registration or have it suspended.

In Queensland and Tasmania, the Objectionable Literature Act and Objectionable Publications Act respectively do not apply to newspapers but to all other printed matter with the possible exception of single pictures or prints, so that newspapers are only affected by the Vagrants, Gaming and other offences Act in Queensland and the Police Offences Act in Tasmania and the Criminal Code in both states. In South Australia only the Hicklin Test appears to apply, though a defence of literary, scientific or artistic merit may be rejected if "undue emphasis" is placed on sexual matters. Also in South Australia, the Children's Protection Act 1936-61 provides sanctions against people making obscene publications available to children under the age of sixteen. In Western Australia, no recent legislation has been enacted dealing with obscene publications and most legislation rests on codification of the common law misdemeanours of obscene libels and provisions of the Police Act. In all state prosecutions for obscenity (as well as with the Commonwealth) there is no provision for trial by jury apart from cases arising from the common law misdemeanour of publishing an obscene libel.<sup>14</sup> Except in Queensland, no prosecutions for obscenity can proceed without the written permission of the appropriate Cabinet Minister.

The most recent of the bureaucratic bodies concerned with censorship is the State Advisory Committee on Publications in N.S.W. which advises the Chief Secretary on whether a particular publication has literary or artistic merit or medical or scientific value and which also is intended to advise publishers whether intended works would be liable to prosecution. The Committee is also to report to the Minister on whether a specific publication or class thereof should be classified as 'restricted' and therefore not to be sold to people under 16. Unlike the N.S.W. Committee which has only an advisory power, both the Queensland Literature Board of Review and the Tasmanian Publication Board of Review can of themselves prohibit publications but are expressly prevented from considering newspapers. A major difference between the two Boards is that <sup>the</sup> Queensland one can ban

subsequent issues of a magazine on the basis of its objection to one particular issue. The Tasmanian Objectionable Publications Act, which established the Board of Review, specified that a publication is objectionable if it

"consists in substantial parts of pictures (whether with or without the addition of words) and -

- (a) is of an indecent nature or suggests indecency; or
- (b) portrays, describes or suggests acts or situations of a violent, horrifying or criminal or of an immoral nature"<sup>15</sup>

Before making an order of prohibition, the Tasmanian Board must publicly notify its intention so to do. Any person who objects to the order can appear before the Board for a hearing of the objection. There is, however, no right of appeal to a court. Queensland, on the other hand, gives a right of appeal but no right of hearing. As the N.S.W. Board is purely advisory, it has neither right.

In all states except South Australia legislation exists prohibiting the advertising of contraceptives although the Queensland situation is not completely clear and in fact such advertising may not be illegal.

Censoring material for blasphemy is a rare occurrence and the Customs officials interviewed by Jane Perlez in 1971 could only remember two books that had at any time been banned for this. In an appendix to an article on film censorship, Eric Williams lists as many of the films banned since 1928 as he can find note of, of which only five were presumed banned because of blasphemous content.<sup>16</sup> No recent prosecution for blasphemy has been recorded although blasphemous libel remains a common law misdemeanour and is in some states codified in the Criminal Codes. At one stage this applied to virtually any attack on the Christian religion, now it applies to any religion but only if the attack is in such a manner as to provoke a breach of the peace.

Although prosecutions for sedition rarely occur in peacetime, it is an offence both in the Commonwealth Crimes Act, in the Criminal Codes of Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia and in common law in other states. As well, the Commonwealth Customs Act prohibits the importation of seditious works. Sawyer gives a definition taken from the Commonwealth Crimes Act:

"A seditious document is one displaying an intention to bring

the Sovereign into hatred or contempt; to excite disaffection against the Sovereign, Constitution and Parliament of Britain, the British Commonwealth, The Commonwealth and the States; to advocate the alteration, otherwise than by lawful means, of any matter established by law; to promote feelings of illwill and hostility between different classes of people"<sup>17</sup>

It is, however, not seditious to point out errors, bad advice or causes of illwill, nor to urge their correction by lawful means. A similar restriction embodied in the Tasmanian Criminal Code in the same chapter as that dealing with sedition, is concerned with libels on foreign powers. The section states

"Any person who, without lawful justification, publishes any writing tending to degrade, revile, or expose to hatred or contempt, the people or government of any foreign state, or any officer or representative thereof in high authority, is guilty of a crime"<sup>18</sup>

The legal control most commonly affecting the mass media exists in the various Defamation Acts or in those states which have not codified it, the common law offence of defamation. Queensland, Tasmania and N.S.W. constitute the code states although basic common law ideas and principles have been incorporated. The Western Australian Criminal Code covers criminal libel but leaves civil questions to common law. Victoria and South Australia leave defamation as substantially a common law concern although modifying it to some extent in their respective Wrongs Acts.

Sawer defines a defamatory statement at common law as one which either

"(i) holds a person up to hatred, ridicule or contempt.....  
or (ii) lowers a person in the estimation of right thinking persons generally;.....  
or (iii) cause a man to be shunned or avoided by his fellows...  
or (iv) imputes to a person unfitness for, lack of qualifications for or incompetence in his trade, office or profession"<sup>19</sup>

Although it has apparently never been used, a provision exists in N.S.W. Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania to extend the application of defamation actions to cover situations in which the family, living or dead,

of a living person were imputed in such a way that the personal or trade reputation of the living person is injured. The Tasmanian Defamation Act 1957 provides, as do those in N.S.W., Queensland and possibly Western Australia for a defence of truth saying

"It is lawful to publish defamatory matter if-

a) The matter is true; and

b) it is for the public benefit that the publication should be made"<sup>20</sup>

and

In Victoria, /South Australia the fact that the statement was true is alone a complete defence.

Another defence is 'fair comment'; in Victoria and South Australia where it is part of the common law rules, the comment must be about a matter of public interest, must not be published maliciously and must be substantially true. If comment and fact are not reasonably separate, all the matter must be defended as fact. Under the codes fair comment must fall within certain areas. Firstly it may deal with matters which have qualified privilege (see later), secondly it may be concerned with the public conduct of people concerned in public affairs, such as public servants, judges, witnesses in court, public entertainments, sports and published literary works and the character of such people insomuch as it affects the activity in question; thirdly

"any communication made to the public on any subject (but not in this case the character of the person concerned)"<sup>21</sup>

The major difference between common law and statutory provisions regarding fair comment apart from the<sup>se</sup> areas, is that under common law, the requirements for truth and factual basis are more strict and rigid than in the statutes.

In some cases there exists absolute privilege, of exemption from actions for defamation and such cases are primarily concerned with the activities of government, parliamentary privilege, and proceedings in courts of law. By statute, this privilege has been extended to Royal Commissions and various statutory bodies of investigation such as the Broadcasting Control Board. Sawyer lists the statutory instances of absolute privilege as

"(i) official reports of proceedings in Parliaments

(Hansards) and in their committees and to papers published by authority of a parliament or committee. (All States)

(ii) verbatim copies of documents privileged under (i).

(All States except Tasmania where the privilege for copies is qualified only)....

(iii) In Western Australia only, extracts or abstracts from State parliamentary privilege under (i).

(iv) Broadcasts of Commonwealth parliamentary proceedings."<sup>22</sup>

Qualified privilege appli<sup>e</sup>d to the mass media depends on the existence of evidence of good faith and reasonable use of privilege. The main cases involve fair and accurate reports of parliamentary proceedings and summaries thereof, similar reports of public judicial proceedings, of municipal and ~~other~~ other local authorities' public proceedings, of reports and findings of Royal Commission and statutory enquiries, of public meetings and notices and reports issued by government departments and police officers with a request for publication. Also protected by qualified privilege are: matter published in the performance of a legal, social or moral duty to persons having a corresponding interest in receiving it (for example character references but only <sup>in</sup> journals of restricted circulation among members of a trade or profession), matter published in defence of an interest (usually in the form of counterattack), copies of official documents available for public inspection, and matter published with the consent of or on the challenge of the plaintiff. In the code states only, matter published for the public good is covered by the qualified privilege conditions but this has never sufficed of itself as a defence, it is apparently included to cover unforeseen eventualities.<sup>23</sup>

The basic requirements to qualify as evidence of good faith and reasonable use of privilege includes absence of malice, no knowledge of falsity, moderation and sobriety of statement, prominence and placement of material (i.e. no greater emphasis on the article in question than on other similar material). Apologies and explanatory letters can also be important for proving that something was printed without malice and some state statutes include provisions dealing with the nature, prominence and consequences of printing apologies.

When an action for defamation is taken out, everyone concerned with both the writing and distribution of the publication is liable - the writer, sub-editors and editor, owners and publishers, printer and even at times the distributor. In 1969, in the Wilkie-Deamer Newspaper lecture, Mr. Justice Elsie-Mitchell attacked the system of awarding damages after protracted litigation over defamation cases as an ineffectual means of preserving the rights of the individual and suggested instead the establishment of a statutory body similar to the English Press Council with judicial power to forbid the publication of defamatory material under penalty and to order the publication of apologies and correcting statements. This was proposed not only as a less expensive method than the present system, but also as very much more satisfactory. The lecture had unfavourably compared the time wasted in defamation cases with the expedition and manner of operation of contempt of court cases. (To be discussed later).

Actions for defamation become much more complex when the material is not in a printed form but is on television or radio. The Broadcasting and Television Act says

"For the purposes of the law of defamation, the transmission of words or any other matter by a broadcasting station or a television station...shall be deemed to be publication in permanent form"<sup>24</sup>

Problems, however, arise in that people believing themselves to have been defamed have no right to claim transcripts of the offending programme. Licensees are not obliged to keep records of programmes unless the subject matter is political or refers to current affairs in which case the record must be kept for six weeks. The procedure appears to be to find a number of people who heard the offending statements to gain a reasonable idea of the content, to get a legal opinion on whether the supposed statement was defamatory and if it is so believed, to threaten the licensee with legal action to obtain a transcript and then to take action if necessary. Early in March 1972, during debate on the Broadcasting and Television Bill, R.G. Sherry, Labour member for Franklin, moved an amendment calling for people to have the right to demand transcripts if they believed themselves to have been defamed by statements on Radio or television<sup>25</sup> but the



Bill has not yet been passed.

Reporting public judicial proceedings is another area where a journalist must be particularly careful, for while fair and accurate reports are subject to privilege, the report must be absolutely impartial and accurate and the journalist must be sure not to come into contempt of court. In some cases courts may prohibit reporting of a case while in progress and even some aspects of it after the case is finished and reporting it in the face of these prohibitions is either contempt of court or a statutory offence. Proceedings under the Commonwealth Matrimonial Causes Act must be reported with great care as the publication of evidence is forbidden by statute as are all proceedings under the Venereal Diseases Act. Because of considerable uncertainty over the exact provisions and changes in the amount of discretion allowed to the courts, reports of the proceedings of Children's Courts appear rarely and then usually without any means of identifying the child. Contempt of court may be committed by making statements that obstruct the course of justice or tend to bring the court into disrepute although the power to deal with such cases summarily rests only with superior courts. Contempt is most likely to occur while a case is pending, for during this time only public steps publicly taken may be reported and accounts of police investigations bearing on the innocence or guilt of the accused, or publication of portraits of the accused if identification is likely to be an issue, or any favouring of one side is likely to be held contemptuous. Criticisms of courts, judges or decisions must be objective and very obviously without malice for, particularly if they could ~~have~~ have any conceivable effect on an ongoing case, they may be held to be likely to lessen confidence in the judicial system and hence be contemptuous.

Contempt of parliament, more frequently called parliamentary privilege is similar to contempt of court because historically the English Parliament is a court and the privileges of a court including the power to punish contempts by summary trial by the House have been extended by statute to the Commonwealth Parliament and the Victorian and South Australian parliaments. In these cases libellous statements about the institution of parliament or about its members are contempts. In 1955, a journalist,

Frank Browne and a newspaper proprietor, Raymond Fitzpatrick, were goaled for three months for contempt of parliament after Browne had written a series of articles in Fitzpatrick's paper attacking the Labour member for Reid. The accused admitted that the purpose of the articles was to intimidate the member and the Privileges Committee of the House decided that this was a contempt and goaled them. There was considerable criticism at the time of the way in which due process of law had been ignored, for the accused had neither legal representation nor an impartial body trying them. In N.S.W. contempts committed outside the House are dealt with by the ordinary courts and in Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania contempt is defined to exclude defamation of members or the institution.

In 1952, the Australian government introduced a system of 'D' notices modelled on the system used in the United Kingdom, presumably because classified British information was being transmitted to Australia where no such safeguards existed. These notices are issued to newspaper editors prohibiting the publication of any information concerning certain areas. The areas are supposed to be all concerned with defence but this is not always the case. It appears that the system, which has no legal basis and is ~~not~~ claimed to be entirely voluntary, first came to the public notice with an article by Richard Farmer in Nation in July 1967 pointing out that an article proposed by the Australian on the obtaining of copies of messages sent home from embassies in Canberra had been dropped because it was discovered that the topic was subject to a 'D' notice.<sup>26</sup> The procedure is outlined in a letter quoted by the Member for East Sydney (Mr. Devine) in the House of Representatives on the 14th May 1968.

"when particular classified matters affecting Defence require special protection in the national interest, a draft 'D' notice is submitted to the Defence Press and Broadcasting Committee, which may accept it as it stands, or seek some amendment. When the D notice has been accepted by the Committee it is then issued on a private and confidential basis to editors and managers of newspapers, radio and television stations in the name of the Committee with the request that they observe the restrictions contained in it".<sup>27</sup>

Mr. Devine also explained the composition of the Defence Press and Broadcasting Committee and listed such of the D notices as he could discover. The membership as of May 1968 was: the Chairman of the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd. as representative of the Australian Newspaper Council, the Managing Director of John Fairfax and Sons Ltd., and representatives of Mirror Newspapers, of the Australian Provincial Daily Press, of the Federation of Australian Commercial Broadcasters, of the ABC, of the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations and the Secretaries of the Departments of Defence, Navy, Air and Supply.<sup>28</sup> According to Professor Harry Whitmore, the committee never in practice meets, but considers the proposed notices individually.<sup>29</sup>

Devine cited nine notices but they were numbered with exceptions to 16 so it is possible that some had been dropped. They were concerned with air and naval defence, with technical information on weapons, with secret agents, with radio and radar as they are used in defence - all legitimate in terms of the protection of defence interests - but one of them, Number 12, was concerned with the Petrov Royal Commission and another, Number 14, with official documents.<sup>30</sup> This seems to support claims that notices do cover more than defence. It is likely that the notice on the Petrov Royal Commission has been dropped as the ABC were able to screen a documentary on the life of H.V. Evatt, although it apparently took some time for an acceptable form to be devised. Whitmore claims that loopholes exist in the whole practice as D notices are not issued to learned publications<sup>31</sup> which could unwittingly describe, for instance, the technical characteristics of some particular weapon. If such publication was really damaging to Australian Security, however, it is probable that the Crimes Act could be used quite effectively against it.

There are many other laws which affect what can be printed, published or broadcast. Acts concerned with Lotteries, Gaming and Betting prohibit the advertising of illegal and unlicensed gambling. There are various restrictions varying from state to state on advertising, and election material is subject to many restrictions to be dealt with as they affect the individual media later.

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CHAPTER 3THE PRESS

Because the press is so much older a phenomenon than the electronic media, examination of the controls imposed on it must follow a different pattern from that to be used on the more recently developed mass communication channels. The controls themselves are of a different nature, for the tradition of a 'free press' demands at least lip service from the government which could enact legislation concerning the newer media even before they were established. This does not mean of course that governments have not tried to control the press - It is just that the latter have been more successful in fighting off formal restrictions.

As well as this, some of the techniques used in controlling the news to be discussed in relation to the press, because this is the medium most concerned with the news, apply to the news sections of the electronic media. Australia's first newspaper was the Sydney Gazette established in 1803 and totally subservient to the authorities. It was censored either by the Governors or their secretaries and was virtually an alternate mouthpiece for them. The official view of such censorship was the usual one of being in the public interest. A writer explains (in 1809)

"A vigilant eye was kept upon it, to prevent the appearance of anything which could tend to shake those principles of morality and subordination on the due preservation of which depended the individual happiness, and the public security of the settlement"<sup>1</sup>

Such censorship ceased in 1824 and opposition papers began to appear. Attempts were then made to impose a stamp duty on each newspaper sold, but as Chief Justice Forbes refused to certify the Act, it had to be dropped. At the same time a bill was passed to deal with mischiefs and libels, demanding sureties and providing for harsh penalties including banishment following a second conviction for libel. In 1841, the harshness of this Act was repealed and newspaper publishers were no longer in a particularly iniquitous position. As well as the libel acts which were used ruthlessly to control comment adverse to government interest, the governments could

also control or influence the press by the granting of printing contracts and the insertion of advertisements. Once special government printers were established, this means of control went, but advertisements remained very important. Indeed this still may be so, for example, part of the proposed ALP scheme for establishing state-run newspapers depends on such papers being given all the lucrative government advertising. Henry Mayer points out other means of control used by colonial Governors such as the manipulation of the duty on ink and paper, the provision of newspaper trains and of the free postage of newspapers.<sup>2</sup> With the coming of Federation, the free postage and train passage of newspapers ceased.

In 1903 there were 21 capital city dailies owned by 17 independent owners, this increased to 26 dailies with 21 separate owners in 1923 but the depression started the downward slide into fewer papers and oligopolistic control. In 1963 the 14 capital city dailies were owned by 6 independent bodies,<sup>3</sup> but now (late 1972) the situation has become even more rigid with these 14 and the one national daily being controlled in effect by only three separate groups, and one of these, the Herald and Weekly Times, controlling 8. This means that only in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide is there competition between newspapers of rival companies and in Adelaide this is modified by the two papers being one a morning and the other an evening publication. The Herald and Weekly Times controls the Sun-News Pictorial and the Herald in Melbourne, The Courier-Mail and the Telegraph in Brisbane, The Advertiser and the Daily News in Perth and the Mercury in Hobart. John Fairfax Ltd. controls the Sydney Morning Herald and the Sun in Sydney and the Age in Melbourne, while Rupert Murdoch's News Ltd. controls the Daily Telegraph and the Daily Mirror in Sydney, The News in Adelaide and the one national daily, the Australian.

The reasons for the decrease in the numbers of papers and in their owners are not very difficult to find. The trend is world wide, and due primarily to the increased cost of almost all sections of the industry, but also to the growth in the electronic media. The number of newspapers per head of population has not decreased, but active demand for a great variety in press offerings has diminished as the number of alternative news and entertainment media increase. One of the most expensive aspects

of the newspaper industry is the machinery necessary and this must be kept in as near to maximum usage as possible, hence the owners of one newspaper may attempt to buy up another as one way of achieving this. Owning a multiplicity of newspapers and magazines also means that the number of people employed, especially journalists, can be limited, as witnessed by the number dispensed with following Rupert Murdoch's purchase of the Daily Telegraph. At times the newspaper may be bought simply to prevent the opposition becoming more powerful or new opposition from moving in. The high cost of newspaper production as well as establishment costs militate against newcomers entering the field unless they are unusually determined and have a highly profitable main source of income.

Although the main examination of the extent of mass media monopolies and the other interests held by the comparatively small number of directors occurs later in this thesis, it is nonetheless important to examine the effects of the oligopolistic nature of Australian newspaper ownership, attitudes towards it and some of the proposals to alter it. The British Royal Commission on the Press (1947-49), which was set up primarily to investigate the monopoly situation there, took as one of its standard requirements that

"the number and variety of newspapers should be such that the Press as a whole gives the opportunity for all important points of view to be effectively presented in term of the varying standards of taste, political opinion and education among the principal groups of the population."<sup>4</sup>

It is unlikely<sup>1</sup> that anyone could suppose that the Australian press, especially the capital city dailies, which comprise according to Henry Mayer 90% of the Australian Daily circulation,<sup>5</sup> fulfils this requirement, and for this reason, the frequent indictments of press monopolies seem justified. The same Commission pointed out the dangers in a press monopoly such as exists in cities without competition like Brisbane, Perth and Hobart, this

"is that the monopolist, by its selection of news and the manner in which it reports it, and by its commentary on public affairs, is in a position to determine what people shall read about the events and issues of the day, and to



exert a strong influence on their opinions. Even if this position is not consciously abused, a paper without competition may fall below the standards of accuracy and efficiency which competition enforces."<sup>6</sup>

In his chapter 'monopoly and variety', Henry Mayer, while accepting that newspaper monopolies were generally regarded as undesirable, questions the difference a change to a more diverse situation than exists at present, would make. He cites the existence of complaints made in the Twenties which are similar to those raised against monopolists now. As well as this he points out that monopolists whose main concern in making a profit, such as Roy Thomson, on whom some claim Rupert Murdoch has modelled himself, tend to give their editors as much freedom in policy formulation as they want provided the product makes a profit. The conclusion Mayer seems to arrive at is that no one can really make a definite statement on the effect of monopolies on the Australian press because of other factors such as the adaption to community/audience pressures, the strength and reputation of the editor and the nature of the paper itself, for instance whether it is popular or quality inasmuch as Australian papers can be placed in one or the other category.<sup>7</sup>

Although monopoly may reduce the variety of newspapers available it does not necessarily mean that, in the Australian context for example, we are being forced to read the views of three men or of three boards of directors. Unless it can be shown that these people do have a significant effect on the day-to-day running of the papers, the fear of being manipulated by press barons is unfounded, and even then people have to act in accordance with the prescriptions of the manipulators. It is rare to find an editor admitting to being directed by his newspaper's proprietor, not only because such an admission would reduce his prestige, but also because it may cost him his job, since the public appear to be unwilling to believe that a person can do what he likes with something he owns when that something is a newspaper. The subject was however discussed on a segment of a TDT programme in August 1972 shortly after the dismissal of Adrian Deamer as editor of the Australian by its owner Rupert Murdoch. The interview was primarily concerned with Sir Frank Packer's attitudes towards John Gorton

and his role in changing the Prime Minister, with Maxwell Newton believing that Packer had had significant influence and Rohan Rivett doubting this. Possibly the most valuable general statement to arise from this interview was made by Newton about the attempts of various proprietors to influence him during his career. He said

"I suppose I was asked to buck at Menzies pretty thoroughly during the Fifties on the Herald, but my heart was in that task. I was double-crossed by Warwick Fairfax in the 1963 elections when he and Rupert Henderson and I had a deal to support The Labour Party and Warwick double-crossed us on the eve of the election. I've been asked to write a lot of articles during the Fifties by Rupert Henderson hoeing into Menzies on defence and a lot of other matters. I don't think they made much of an impact on Menzies, though"<sup>8</sup>

The two other ex-editors, Adrian Deamer and Rohan Rivett, claimed that they had been asked to soft-pedal on particular politicians because the proprietors valued them. The overall conclusion seemed to be that although proprietors did try to influence editors, and all editors realized that this would happen when they took the position on, they were not very successful in affecting either the public or the politicians although Sir Frank Packer seemed more effective than most. Since the interview, Sir Frank has sold his Daily Telegraph although he maintains his other media interests. Another comment on the influence of proprietors occurs in an article anonymously written in the Australian Quarterly, which says

"Warwick Fairfax will occasionally try to influence his newspapers by trying to write an editorial or talking quietly to one of his editors, but this is mild stuff compared to the way Packer exercises power..... He is consulted about virtually every facet of production of the Daily Telegraph, the Sunday Telegraph and the two 9 television channels covering Melbourne and Sydney. In these media, Packer personally vets every political story of significance and writes or dictates the 'line' of the leaders. Or else this job is delegated to the Editor-in-chief, David McNicoll

a constant companion of the 'old man'."9

In the next issue of the quarterly, Warwick Fairfax replied to this article and while his reply to the quoted charge is unclear, his statements on possible and actual methods of his exercising control are revealing. Of the possible, he says

"Nothing would be easier than for me to see that whenever an important issue arose, every editorial foot would toe the line in every leading article."10

while he outlines actuality as

"the Sydney Morning Herald has been and always will be the particular guardian of our traditions, especially in editorial policy. This I attend to personally. As the other newspapers are acquired or started, editors are appointed who it is known have the feelings and the capacity to work in harmony with that tradition."10

Suggestions for dealing with monopolies have come from the Labour party, trade unions and from journalists themselves. Possibly because both the former believe that they are unfairly treated or ignored by existing newspapers, they have advanced proposals for new newspapers. An independent newspaper first became part of Labour party platform in 1961 when the Federal Conference resolved

"That an Australian Newspaper Commission be established to produce newspapers in Canberra and in the capital of any state which authorizes the Commission to function in that state."12

The latter provision was an attempt to overcome constitutional difficulties. It was intended that newspapers so established compete with existing ones and be begun first in capitals without rival newspapers. The latest comments on this plan came from Senator Doug McClelland who pointed out that the proposed newspaper, now apparently to be a single national, would be economically feasible as much of the \$14 million spent annually on Commonwealth advertising could be given to it.12 The ACTU also has proposals to start a newspaper, but unlike the ALP, which intends its paper to be run by an independent Commission, the ACTU paper would be avowedly a Trade Union

paper. Following the purchase of the Daily Telegraph and the closure of the Sunday Australian, some of the more radical of present journalists proposed that if a paper was closed down, it was possible for the staff to take over and run it themselves, establishing a management committee of the section heads who would obtain financial backing either by floating a public company or by getting the trade unions' support.<sup>13</sup> Although this is designed more to save journalists from losing their jobs than to alter the oligopolist situation, the latter is important in the proposed public promotion and in getting trade union support. The suggestion is part of the growing interest among journalists and printing workers in worker control of newspapers - a concept which operates in varying degrees on Der Spiegel, le Monde and even in a very small way on the Minneapolis Tribune.

Referring back to the comment on Sir Frank Packer and David McNicoll, it will be seen that here is one example of the way proprietorial control is exercised. A man is promoted by his superiors who will select a person whose work they approve of and hence whose work frequently is like theirs. The higher echelons will be selected by the proprietor or the board of directors who will choose either a man who will maximise profitability, if they regard newspapers primarily as a business, or a man who agrees with them or will be amenable to direction if they have other than a purely business interest. Thus Sir Frank Packer would appear to trust the judgement of David McNicoll whereas Rupert Murdoch would appear to have been in an equivocal position vis a vis Adrian Deamer before he sacked him. According to an article in the Listener in 1969, Murdoch was interested simply in making money from his newspapers and had no political commitment. He established the Australian to give his newspaper prestige and because a popular paper could not hope to attract the advertising he would need.<sup>14</sup> Thus it would appear that Deamer was sacked from the Editorship of the Australian because the profits were down and indeed circulation had fallen since the high of the mining boom of 1970, but rumours persisted that his sacking was due to his attitudes to the Vietnam war, apartheid and the Liberal party. Since Deamer's departure, the major changes have been in format - a larger sports section and more very short news items - although

there has also been a move towards a more conservative treatment of political stories. Circulation has now increased.

Leo Rosten in his 1937 study, The Washington Correspondents, said

"What the newspaperman tells, what he considers worth telling and how he tells it are the end products of a social heritage a functional relationship to his superiors and a psychological construct of desire, calculation and inhibition."<sup>15</sup>

As a statement of the internal controls over a journalist, this holds today. His environment, superiors, peers, sources, hopes, aspirations and fears, all guide the journalist as news gatherer and processor, as transmitter of information. The general factors which determine that a piece of information will be selected as an item of news have been outlined in Chapter 1, but these are neither taught nor learnt in any explicit context.

In one of the few articles concerned with this process, Warren Breed points out the reasons why the publisher of a paper rarely either explicitly states the policy of the paper or overtly forces his staff to adhere to it. This is because of a journalistic code of ethics which can be evoked by the usually more liberal, if only because younger, staff to support their freedom of reportorial action and the convention, called by Breed the 'ethical taboo' against publishers commanding their subordinates' obedience in matters of policy.<sup>16</sup> Despite this there is an adherence by journalists to their paper's policy and this comes about because the new recruit is first socialized into the norms of the paper by reading it to find what type of stories appear, by having certain stories consistently rejected or altered, by oblique reprimands and by discovering the dislikes or pet projects of his seniors. Having learnt what is acceptable, he continues to present it because he can be sacked or demoted, or because he will only be promoted if he conforms. His peers and colleagues also share in this, because while they adhere to the policy line he must also try to create a feeling of belonging. The friendly atmosphere of the newsroom, the public image of the journalists and the informal nature of the daily routine, all cause the job to be valued by the journalist and thus he is anxious to keep it and conform to the norms of that section within which he operates.

Having pointed out reasons why journalists accept direction and adhere to policy lines, Breed cites instances when the journalist can have stories accepted despite the fact that they are at variance with the accepted line. These include occasions when the policy line is unclear, or when the executive who vets or accepts the story is unaware of all the facts and may not realize, as the reporter does, that the story is slanted away from, or not as close as possible to, the paper's line. The reporter may plant a story with a friend on a rival paper and thus force his own paper to use a story which normally they would ignore because it has already broken. He can also go after stories which interest him or fail to follow up leads that would support the publisher's beliefs as long as these are not in stories assigned to him. Finally, if he is a star reporter with status and presumably a by-line, the editor/publisher or rewrite man will be less liable to alter or reject his copy than they would that of an unknown.<sup>17</sup> It must be remembered that the majority of stories in a newspaper, however, are not subject to policy decisions. Road accidents, earthquakes, human interest stories, crime and sport are rarely influenced by policy apart from the general type of directive that sport is very important or that reports of crimes of violence are to be toned down (or up).

One of the methods in studying control in the newsroom and the flow of news, is that of the 'gatekeeper', a concept developed by Kurt Lewin in considering the flow of food from source to consumer. He envisaged the food moving along certain channels and passing through various 'gates' such as the one where the housewife decides whether or not to buy it. Lewin also applies this concept to communication channels and to social locomotion of individuals within an organization as well as to food. Of gatekeepers he says

"Gate sections are covered either by impartial rules or by 'gatekeepers'. In the latter case an individual or group is 'in power' for making a decision between 'in' and 'out'. Understanding the functioning of the gate becomes equivalent then to understanding the factors which determine the decisions of the gatekeeper."<sup>18</sup>

In the passage of news from the source to the consumer, there may be

many gates. The first met is the reporter who has to decide whether the item of news is important enough to warrant a story being written about it. If he works for a cable agency, other gates the news will encounter include those at the local agency office, at the central agency and possibly at further relaying points. After passing all these, the news still has to pass through the final gate or gates, of the news editor, cable editor or copy taster of the paper itself.

The gatekeeper most frequently studied is the one operating at the last gate because his is the final decision on what is included in the paper and as he has to choose only a small proportion of the stories he receives, the decision to use a story must be based on significant criteria even if these are unrecognised - as they usually are. He will no doubt apply, unconsciously, Galtung and Ruge's criteria mentioned in Chapter 1, he will use the results of his socialization into the norms of the paper, he will follow the directives of his editor inasmuch as they were laid down in the daily news conference and as he knows them from experience. He may also follow the example of other newspapers, ones he respects, and if these have highlighted or made great use of a story he will either use this fact to support his decision to do likewise or believe that he should do so if other, possibly more practised, people see fit to.<sup>19</sup> Finally however, he has to decide on the basis of his beliefs of news value, of what his readers want and what he believes they should be given, and it is here that an individual's beliefs become important. David Manning White sees some problems in this when he says

"people tend to perceive as true only those happenings which fit into their own beliefs concerning what is likely to happen... [thus]...the community shall hear as a fact only those events which the newsman as representative of his culture believes to be true"<sup>20</sup>

If the newsman is truly representative of his audience, this may mean that the paper serves its readers very well giving them what they want, but it may prove recalcitrant in providing information about happenings of which the paper and the community are not overeager to become aware.

Another important control over the news is that applied by the news

sources. This also has been mentioned in Chapter 1, but becomes increasingly important for the press in the area of local and state politics. It is a hypothesis frequently advanced that while papers do not really have very much influence over their readers, they do influence politicians who believe the power of the press is great. Certainly politicians of whatever degree of eminence are inordinately interested in the press and seek to influence it if they can. As they are often the source of much of the news going into a paper they can feed in the information they want (and trust that no one reveals the other side of the story) or attempt to ensure that certain unpleasant facts remain out by hinting that they will not be so useful in future should they be displeased in the present. It usually appears that papers support the government or group in power, if only because they receive a greater coverage but this is inevitable as they are the group doing things, easing taxes, building office blocks, improving drainage or enticing new industries into the area, while the only active thing the opposition can do apart from complaining about government activities is split and suffer internal warfare. There have been studies which give other reasons for press support of local (be it state or city) government. One of the best of these is an American study which explains how, inadvertently, a reporter may give support to a local council's authority by

"condensing and summarizing, investing events with rationality and coherence...emphasising the council's decisions at the expense of its other activities, accurately conveying the specifics of these decisions and treating the council and its members with respect...[thus]...the reporters articles support the council's authority in three general ways: by creating a sense of psychological distance between the authority and the reader; by rationalizing time and thereby reducing the reader's anxiety; and by providing symbolic reassurance"<sup>21</sup>

Thus the compiling of a coherent story may create an impression of an efficient council while the reality may be quite different. This does not necessarily mean however that sources on councils or in governments have influenced journalists to keep themselves in power. Rationalizing the news, making it easily comprehensible is part of the journalists' duties



and indeed it is possible to claim that the audience, by demanding news of this type, by being unwilling to accept reality with its muddled ambiguous nature, are controlling the news they receive. In this particular instance they are helping to maintain the council in office as a respected, responsible body.

With regard to the news sources, Henry Mayer discusses the problem of differential accessibility of news sources,<sup>22</sup> which is another reason why the press is sometimes unjustly charged with bias. Some groups have highly organized relationships with the press, using official spokesmen, public relations officers or developing personal contacts with journalists. Consequently, because of their accessibility, their willingness to give information, they are likely to receive better and more frequent treatment than groups who regard the press with distrust, or as an enemy or something to be avoided whenever possible. Despite the distrust of PR men which traditionally is felt by journalists, the appointment and use of officers to mediate between organizations and the press must be seen, whatever its success, as yet another method of attempting to control what is printed.

Apart from the manipulating monopolist, sitting atop his press empire directing which information will be fed to the receptive millions who read only his product, the most prevalent myth or fear about the press is fear of advertisers. Since they are necessary for the financial success of the paper whether it is a highly priced national weekly or a suburban throwaway, it is inevitable that they should try to have some say in the news or comment which surrounds their advertisements. As their intention is to sell their product, they want to be placed among news and information that will create a buying climate. Long stories about economic problems and industrial strife are not desirable company for either the hard or the soft sell and the recent increase in stories about ecological problems, particularly those concerned with packaging and its disposal, are both unpopular with advertisers and cause them to alter their advertisements.

The main interest of advertisers with content (as opposed to advertisements and their placing) of the paper is with attempting to get their news releases and unpaid promotional material ('puffs') into the body of the copy. When a large quantity of space will be bought if some free publicity

is given, it is hard for a newspaper to remember that it is concerned with news and not sales promotions. One way of overcoming this is to run supplements which are blatantly advertising vehicles surrounded by actual paid advertisements. These supplements are separate from the main part of the paper, are identified as something other than the news and bring in substantial extra amounts of advertising revenue. Because the advertising sales men on a newspaper are trying to gain as much advertising, of the type they deem suitable, as they can for their paper, they tend to look more favourably on 'puffs' than do the straight newsmen and this creates a form of conflict on the paper that may eventually have to be resolved at a higher managerial level where policy on this point will have to be explicitly stated. The convention of the unbiased presentation of news will militate against acceptance of the salesmen's views, but the feeling of kinship with other businessmen may lead management, particularly non-editorial management, to regard as news information about the business community which the newsmen may regard as 'puffs'. At a lower level of the organization, the tradition of press independence, the dislike of the journalist for the PR man and for the advertisements which keep news out of the paper, all work against the acceptance of 'puffs'. The space occupied is one of the most obvious influences advertisers have over the news. As a certain percentage of the paper must consist of advertisements to make the concern financially viable, the amount of news that can be selected from the available copy is dependent on the amount of space, sometimes called the 'newshole', left after the dummy (i.e. the paper with the advertisements in place but with no news) is made up.

The controls over journalists so far considered are organizational or informal, but there are formalized controls other than the legal ones which exist outside the organization. The Australian Journalists' Association (AJA) was formed at a meeting on December 10, 1910.

"for the purpose of considering the question of forming an organization to secure registration under the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act."<sup>23</sup>

Not only was this to press for better wages, but it also ensured that a journalist's hours of work were limited. It is still primarily concerned

with conditions of work although it has developed a Code of Ethics which each member is required to observe. The organizational structure of the AJA will be seen in the attached diagram. There are eight districts comprising the six states plus Canberra and NSW Provincial, but the centralized structure results in most activities being run by NSW journalists since the federal headquarters are in Sydney and there is only one full-time federal officer. Although district presidents each have a seat on the federal executive which meets weekly and administers the Association between annual and special meetings of the federal council, they are usually represented by Sydney journalists (except of course for the NSW district president) who do not have to make weekly interstate journeys which actual attendance would demand.<sup>24</sup> The present functioning of the AJA has come under criticism from groups such as the radical Democratic Reform Group, the group publishing the New Journalist and a team working for reform within the AJA which ran at the last NSW district elections on a ticket headed by John Lawrence. The main criticisms seem to be about the authoritarianism of the AJA establishment and its concern with maintaining the status quo by fighting off even suggestions for change other than in salaries.

Nonetheless the main control over the actual news exerted by the AJA is that imposed by adherence to the Code of Ethics. This was established in 1944 the intention of it being best described by Henry Mayer:

"the moral rules, assumed to reflect community concensus, and to be forced by the union, are essentially an attempt to diminish status ambivalence and anxiety by an outline of professional duties".<sup>25</sup>

If the Ethics Committee of the AJA finds that a member has violated the code, they can fine or expel him. This power was upheld by a decision of the Full Arbitration Court in 1948, but of course it is binding on members only, not on management. As journalists in other media may also be AJA members and the code is binding on all, it is perhaps worthwhile to quote it in full. Referring to the journalist, it directs

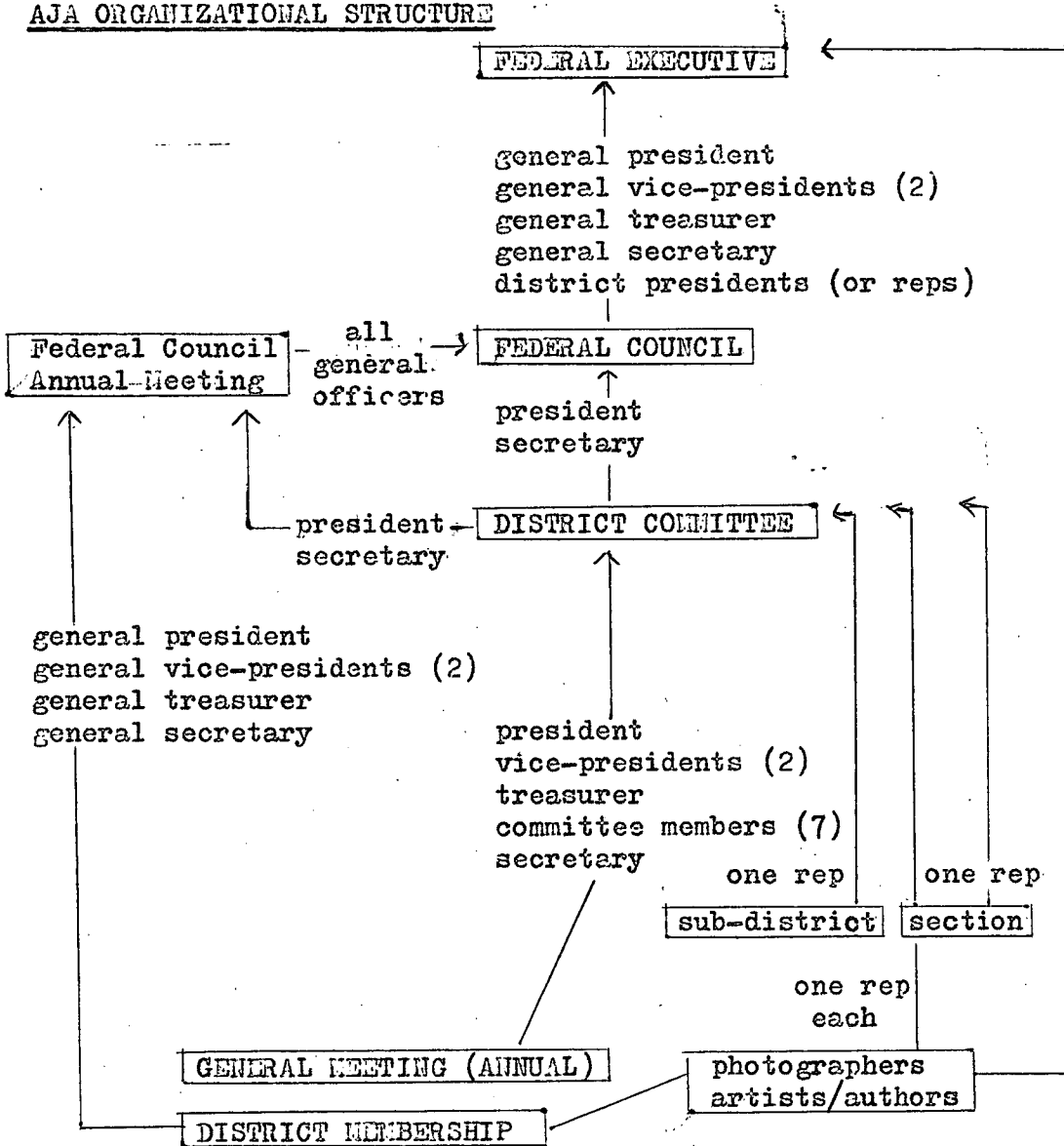
- "1. He shall report and interpret the news with scrupulous honesty,
2. He shall not suppress essential facts and shall not

- distort the truth by omission or improper emphasis.
3. He shall in all circumstances respect all confidences received by him in the course of his calling.
  4. He shall observe at all times the fraternal obligations arising from his membership of the Association, and shall not on any occasion take unfair or improper advantage of a fellow member of the Association.
  5. He shall not allow his personal interest to influence him in the discharge of his duties, nor shall he accept or offer any present, gift or other consideration, benefit or advantage of whatsoever kind if such acceptance or offer is of a character which may have the effect of so influencing him or benefitting him.
  6. He shall use only fair and honest means to obtain news, pictures or documents.
  7. He shall reveal his identity as a representative of the press or of radio or television services before obtaining any personal interview for the purpose of using it for publication.
  8. He shall do his utmost to maintain full confidence in the integrity and dignity of the calling of a journalist."<sup>26</sup>

While not claiming that all of these are followed by all journalists all of the time, or anything like it, these still represent the ideal to which journalists aspire or pretend to aspire, and they do reveal the various ways in which a reporter can gain some control, deemed unfair, over the news he collects. With regard to item 3, it should be pointed out that there is no legal basis for this respecting of confidences in Australia. It is quite easy to abide by it until the journalist is a witness before a court of law or before a parliamentary or similar committee with statutory powers to examine witnesses under oath, but in these cases he has no more rights than the ordinary citizen and may be charged with contempt of court if he refuses to disclose his source of information.

The final source of control over the news to be studied is that exercised by the technical staff most of whom are members of the Printing

and Kindred Industries Union (PKIU). If they strike or refuse to print an article (a rare occurrence, but one that did happen on the Daily Telegraph in 1953) they can affect the output considerably. The increase in the use of computer type-setting and various other automated printing techniques have reduced the power of the printers as was seen in the Sydney strike early in 1972 where the size of the papers was reduced and the content altered, but non-technical staff were nonetheless able to produce a recognizable version of their newspapers. Closer liaison between the AJA and the PKIU, as has been suggested by some members of both organizations, would give all workers on newspapers much greater power particularly following the recent electronic advances - for then in the event of a strike not only the production, but also the news gathering and processing would have to be done by the management. Even when the AJA and the PKIU members are all working, the papers can still be affected by a strike by drivers of the distribution lorries.

AJA ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

from New Journalist No.2, June-July, 1972, p.11.

FOOTNOTES

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3. Ibid., p. 31.
4. Report of the Royal Commission on the Press 1947-49, London, 1947 p. 176
5. Henry Mayer: op.cit., p. 173
6. Royal Commission (1947-49) op. cit., p.77.
7. Henry Mayer: op.cit., chapter 11.
8. Transcript of an interview conducted by Alan Hogan on TDT 13.8.71, shown in Tasmania on Line-Up, 16.8.71.
9. Mr.Y. "A Packer Plot", Australian Quarterly, Vol.43, No.2, June 1971, pp.2-3. I have used this article despite its anonymous authorship, accepting the comment in the journal in which it appears  

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CHAPTER 4THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING COMMISSION

The early history of broadcasting in Australia set the pattern for the dual national/commercial system now in existence. In 1905, the Commonwealth Parliament passed the Wireless Telegraph Act which gave control over the new medium to the Government; the act was amended in 1919 to extend this to control over radio telephony. In the years before and during the First World War, wireless was the province of the experimenter whether government or amateur. In June 1920, the first public demonstration of radio telephony in Australia occurred during the Melbourne Aircraft Exhibition.\* Amalgamated Wireless (A'sia)Ltd., formed in 1913, carried out a series of weekly experimental broadcasts in Melbourne in 1921, while later in the same year signals were exchanged between Tasmania and the mainland by the Commonwealth Radio Service.<sup>1</sup>

In May 1923, the Post-master General, W.G.Gibson, called a conference in Melbourne of all parties interested in establishing systematic broadcasting stations. The conference decided to use a "sealed set" system whereby the listener could receive only the frequency of the station to which he had paid his subscription. The Government would take a ten shilling licence fee. On the 23rd November 1923, the first broadcasting station in Australia, 2SB, commenced operation. The stations were supposed to be supported solely by the subscriptions - direct advertisements were banned. Unfortunately the sealed set system was a financial failure and in July 1924, new government regulations established two categories of stations. This was the beginning of the dichotomy in the Australian broadcasting system. The "A" class stations were maintained by licence fees and a restricted amount of advertising (a maximum of one

\* This fact is disputed by G.Cole: The Australian Broadcasting Control Board and the Regulation of Commercial Radio in Australia since 1948. North Western University Ph.D.Thesis 1966.University Microfilms Inc. Ann Arbor Michigan. p.12 where it is claimed that the first public demonstration was on 13 August 1919 by (Sir) Ernest Fisk before the Royal Society of N.S.W.

hour in every twelve hours of broadcasting) while the "B" class stations were maintained solely by advertising. Both classes of station broadcast advertisements in five minute segments, as the regulations demanded, but the "A" class station warned its listeners at the beginning of each segment of the time it would conclude. It was intended that such stations would provide a greater variety of broadcast material than the "B" class stations.

The problem of control and the power of the new medium arose very quickly. In 1925 the Premier of New South Wales, J.T.Lang, realizing that the press, which was attacking him fiercely at the time, had interests in two Sydney broadcasting stations 2BL and 2FC, through which to further their attack, established 2KY

"the first radio station in the world to be owned and operated by the Labour movement".<sup>2</sup>

The station lost money heavily, so Lang decided to establish a chain of government owned stations in New South Wales, but in 1927 dissolution brought about the defeat of both Lang and his state broadcasting plan.

Popular criticism of the new medium concerned the advertising periods, the lack of variety and the lack of service for the rural areas. It had been hoped that broadcasting would help to ease the feelings of isolation experienced by the country areas, but broadcasters were concerned only with the cities. Rural dissatisfaction over broadcasting forced the government to set up a Royal Commission on Broadcasting in 1927. To correct the weaknesses revealed by their report, the Government directed that "A" class stations be acquired by the Post-master General's Department and the equipment improved so that, among other things, it would serve rural areas more satisfactorily. The Australian Broadcasting Company (formed by Greater Union Theatres Ltd., Fuller's Theatre's Ltd. and J.Albert and Sons) was the successful tenderer for the provision of programmes on all the stations acquired by the Department. The service provided by the Company and the Department - government and private enterprise together - was a considerable improvement, but did not occur quickly enough for the listeners. The Scullin Labour Government intended to nationalize the whole broadcasting system as had

been done in Great Britain, but it was defeated in the 1931 Federal Elections. Joseph Lyon's United Australia Party which then came to power, decided to modify the nationalization proposals. Consequently when the contract with the Australian Broadcasting Company expired in 1932, it was not renewed, for the Government had established the Australian Broadcasting Commission, removing the private enterprise element from the national system and creating the situation which continues today, with the state and private enterprise catering separately for the Australian listening public.

#### THE A.B.C. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The 1932 Act establishing the Australian Broadcasting Commission divided the controlling power between a commission of five people - the chairman, Charles Lloyd Jones, Herbert Brooks, the vice-chairman, R.B.Orchard, Professor R.S.Wallace and Mrs Mary Couchman - and the Post-master General. In explaining this to the Senate during the second reading of the Bill, Senator McLachlan, Vice President of the Executive Council, said

"In certain things the Minister must be supreme since he will be the channel through which the commission will receive the wherewithal to carry on. He also will have certain powers in connection with licensing plants, broadcasting stations and so on. The Government's desire is to make the commission as independent of ministerial or political control as possible".<sup>3</sup>

The licence fee was shared between the A.B.C.and the Post Office and was originally the sole source of finance. The Post Office still maintains control of technical services, but the Minister has suffered some loss of power which will be examined later.

The Commission was intended to be similar to the board of governors of the B.B.C. and Ian MacKay has adapted the Whitley Document which defines the governor's functions to the Australian situation.

"The Chairman and Commissioners of the Australian Broadcasting Commission act primarily as Trustees to safeguard the Broadcasting Service in the national interest. Their

functions are not executive, their responsibilities are general and not particular and they are not divided up for purposes of departmental supervision \*...They are subject to the responsibility and duties laid down by Parliament... with the General Manager they discuss and then decide upon major matters of policy and finance but they leave the execution of that policy and the general administration of the service in all its branches to the General Manager and his competent officers. The Commission should be able to judge of the general effect of the Service upon the public and, subject as beforementioned, are of course finally responsible for the conduct of it".<sup>4</sup>

The A.B.C. began operation on July 1, 1932 with H.P. Williams as General Manager. It had a staff of 265 to supply a service to the whole continent through twelve stations, four of which were regionals. Frank Moorhouse claims that at this stage the A.B.C. saw itself as a Cultural Mission, that its

"primary reason for existence [was] the programming of material which the commercial radio stations did not provide or did not provide adequately - cultural material. But its main aim was to bring about by stealth the unconscious graduation of Australians from cultural ignorance to cultural awareness",<sup>5</sup>

It also intended

"to provide for our keen national interest in sport... to maintain awareness of our position as part of the British Empire and British Race... [and] to hold the balance between competing points of view".<sup>6</sup>

Its first opportunity to do the latter came in September 1932 during E.G. Theodore's campaign to nationalize banking and repudiate indebtedness to overseas investors. The A.B.C. allowed him to broadcast his beliefs but solved the problem of balance by making the programme a

\* Some members of the Commission develop or adopt special interests in particular departments and are regarded as experts on them.

debate between Theodore and Mr.R. Windeyer K.C. who held opposing views.<sup>7</sup>

The first changes in control over the A.B.C. came during World War 11 when it was realized that the service could have the power to boost national morale but would have to be watched carefully to ensure that information of use to the enemy was not broadcast either by Radio Australia, which began operations in December 1939, or within Australia. Between July 1941 and July 1942 Radio Australia was controlled directly by the Department of Information to which department power reverted from April 1944 until 1950. From 1942 until the end of the war, both National and Commercial networks presented the national 7 p.m. News Bulletin. More major changes, however, should have arisen from the Report of a Joint Parliamentary Committee, headed by Senator W.G. Gibson, into the Australian broadcasting services. Among recommendations of the committee were: that the General Manager should attend Commission meetings (this now occurs), that among Ministers only the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition be free from censorship control over the air, that strict rules governing pre-election broadcasting be formulated (this has been done), and that the Government be responsible for overseas propaganda through the Department of Information but that the A.B.C. ~~should~~ should control news broadcasts. In June 1942, Parliament passed the Australian Broadcasting Act 1942 which covered both commercial and national services but which did not substantially alter the constitution of the Committee. It did, however, require that any directions of the Minister to the A.B.C. should be in writing and details of them included in the annual report.

In 1943 the Commission arranged a contract with various press interests over news coverage but the Minister vetoed it claiming his power to do so derived from the clause giving him control rights in matters involving more than £5,000 or contracts lasting over five years. The Commission regarded this as unwarranted interference in their methods of collecting news and challenged the Minister's power of veto. Although the Minister's right was upheld, the dispute led to the establishment of a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting which

was active until 1948. This body did not have a particularly happy relationship with the A.B.C. but with the formation of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board in 1948, relations between the A.B.C. and the controlling body improved, no doubt largely because advice and direction was no longer being received from practising politicians who would be overly susceptible to even minor criticism.

Many of the disputes between the A.B.C. and the Standing Committee arose from the financial difficulties of the A.B.C. during the Forties, although it appears that the Committee was not unsympathetic to the needs of the A.B.C. but just unable to get its recommendations adopted. The A.B.C. was still being financed solely by half of the licence fee and while this was initially sufficient to cover costs, it did not allow for much accumulation of capital which would be needed for the A.B.C. building programmes. During the war many extra costs were placed on the A.B.C. such as paying for the shortwave broadcasts of the Department of Information (Radio Australia) and costs after the war increased rapidly. In 1946 government grants were necessary to cover the A.B.C.'s costs and as the practice of having to apply for government assistance continued, the A.B.C. began to complain of the dangers to its independence when it had to rely on the goodwill of a small number of politicians for its economic survival. The Australian Broadcasting Act 1948 changed the method of financing the A.B.C. so that all licence fees would be paid into consolidated revenue and the A.B.C.'s costs would be covered by parliamentary appropriation. This act increased the number of Commissioners from five to seven so that there would be representatives of the Treasury and the Postmaster General's Department, but there are now no such special commissioners.

As well as the financial problems, the Forties saw problems between personalities and between politicians and the A.B.C. The Chairman of the Commission from June 1934 until February 1945, W.J. Cleary, had chosen Charles Moses to be General Manager of the A.B.C. in October 1935. Moses was at this time only thirty-five, much younger than many of his subordinates, and consequently in the partnership of Chairman and General Manager, Cleary exercised more power than it

had been envisaged that the Chairman would. He certainly exercised power that Moses felt to be his. In the Australian Broadcasting Act 1942, the General Manager was explicitly stated to be the chief executive officer of the Commission and this statement was supposedly inserted by the then leader of the Opposition R.G.(now Sir Robert) Menzies at Charles Moses' instigation. In debate Menzies said

"Where there is a relatively full-time chairman and a full-time manager there is always a grave danger of dual control and that should be avoided. We should make it clear that whilst the Commission itself must have undisputed authority on matters of policy, the general manager shall be the chief executive officer".<sup>8</sup>

Moses had enlisted at the beginning of the war but in February 1943, the Federal Government released him to resume his duties as General Manager. As the Prime Minister, John Curtin, stated that he did so because <sup>he was</sup> dissatisfied with the A.B.C., Moses felt his position to be greatly strengthened and acted accordingly. The divisiveness this created within the highest echelons of the A.B.C. did not help it at a time when it was under severe political attack, often on very minor details involving the hurt pride of various politicians. Cleary resigned in 1945 without giving his reasons for doing so but according to Frank Dixon

"Unofficially the blame was divided between the friction he had with the broadcasting committee and a series of disagreements with Moses".<sup>9</sup>

The problems of political influence caused the new chairman, R.J.F. Boyer, to seek conditions under which the A.B.C. would no longer be so vulnerable to the attacks of politicians, before he accepted the chairmanship. A short time after his appointment, Boyer explained the Prime Minister's assurance

"so far as this nomination is concerned we are unanimous in our determination that no sectional pressure, however powerful or persuasive, shall deter us from presenting as balanced and impartial a picture of events and issues as is humanly possible".<sup>10</sup>

Boyer divided the power between the Commission and the General Manager such that the latter was concerned with internal management (except that senior staff appointments were to be confirmed by the Commission) while the Commission was concerned with the relationship with the Postmaster General and the Government, and with representing the A.B.C. at official functions.

In 1946 the Government passed the Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act to allow for the broadcasting of parliamentary debates. Unfortunately the Government did not take into account the programming already existing in the A.B.C. which would be displaced by parliamentary broadcasts. The more reasonable approach, that of creating a third A.B.C. programme specifically for such broadcasts seems not to have been considered at the time. The A.B.C. had divided its programmes roughly into popular and quality, devoting a network to each. With the coming of parliamentary broadcasting, the quality or 'serious' programme was replaced in metropolitan areas and country listeners had no alternative A.B.C. station at all. R.J.F. Boyer, writing in 1952 said

"If the National Service in Australia is to carry out the purpose for which it was intended to these two broad groups of listeners [quality and popular], it is obvious that a third technical outlet is necessary: one, in short, which will allow the broadcasting of parliament to proceed without interrupting the essential two programmes for metropolitan listeners and at the same time provide a second programme for country listeners".<sup>11</sup>

The A.B.C. did not, and still does not, control the times at which parliamentary proceedings are broadcast, the choice of which house to broadcast or even which network to use; all these decisions are made by a Joint Parliamentary Committee. Virtually the only advantage the A.B.C. gained in regard to parliamentary broadcasting was that the protection of privilege was extended to the A.B.C. to protect it from possible liability for defamation. In 1947 it was suggested that parliament should operate its own transmitters and leave the A.B.C. to be concerned with its own programmes, but nothing came of the suggestion. Many complaints have been voiced since over the quality of parliamentary



broadcasting and the amount of time it occupies but this is one area - a political and controversial one - over which the A.B.C. has no control.

In the early post-war years, there was considerable fear of Communism and the A.B.C. News policy of impartial reporting when applied to, for instance, the statements of militant left-wing Trade Union leaders caused much concern even within the A.B.C. In June 1948, the A.B.C. news editors asked for the authority to censor material they regarded as possible communist propaganda - their right was refused.<sup>12</sup> Attempts at political intervention with the A.B.C. lessened following the Liberal - Country Party victory in December 1949, this was possibly because the Liberal-Country Party position was represented more readily than the Labour position by the Press, consequently they did not regard the A.B.C. as a means of counteracting unfavourable press reports.

With the Fifties both Government and A.B.C. became preoccupied with television. For a short time there was concern that the A.B.C. would not be involved at all, despite the 1946 Television Act which gave to the Government the power over television that it had over radio. In February 1953 a Royal Commission was set up to investigate the establishment of a television service but the government had already decided to have both national and commercial television. Sir Richard Boyer argued before the Royal Commission for commercial television to operate as it now does in Great Britain - television stations owned by public authority but leased to commercial programme companies. The Royal Commission's Report did not endorse this suggestion but did back Boyer in his request for the A.B.C. to have control over television technicians rather than have them controlled by the Post-master General as was the case with radio. The 1956 Television Act gave this power to the A.B.C. and also gave it more autonomy than it had had before. Prior to the commencement of television in 1956, problems about the censorship of television film had to be resolved. The Commission was not happy about the possible limitation of its freedom, particularly in dealing with controversial matters, by the Commonwealth Film Censor and the Customs Department. The Control Board in conjunction with an officer of the A.B.C. was to design a code of ethics to be followed in censoring material. However this problem was not resolved when operation began.

### The Present Situation

The Commission now consists of nine members, appointed by the Governor-General, who

"shall provide and shall broadcast or televise from Transmitting stations made available by the Postmaster-General adequate and comprehensive programmes and shall take in the interests of the community all such measures as in the opinion of the Commission are conducive to the full development of suitable broadcasting and television programmes."<sup>13</sup>

The Commissioners are concerned with overall policy, with major managerial questions, with senior staff appointments and with finance. The financing of the A.B.C. by appropriation from Federal Parliament not only makes long-range planning difficult, but creates an area where pressure may be applied for political reasons. As Bruce Juddery says,

"the A.B.C. is dependent on Parliament for the money it spends and hence has either to keep the Postmaster-General on side or maintain a sufficiently favourable public image to prevent him (or any other group of politicians) from reducing the money supply at will".<sup>14</sup>

An example of this occurred in May 1970 when the Postmaster-General, Mr. Hulme, under considerable pressure from various senior ministers, wrote to the A.B.C. directing a \$500,000 cut in their estimated expenditure for the next financial year and also directing that half of this cut be from the current affairs allocation. This followed many accusations by Liberal parliamentarians of bias in such programmes as Four Corners and This Day Tonight. When news of this action first broke, there was talk also of amendments to the Broadcasting and Television Act to make it possible for Parliament to direct the A.B.C.'s allocation of finance should the Commission refuse to follow the Postmaster-General's direction. At a meeting with Mr Hulme, who apparently was acting reluctantly because he upheld the autonomy of the A.B.C. but was being pressured by fellow ministers, the Commissioners refused to <sup>be</sup> subject to what they regarded as political intervention. The public outcry that had followed news of Mr Hulme's proposals no doubt acted as a demonstration of the favourable public image mentioned by Juddery, for Hulme quickly

dropped his specification of where the cuts in expenditure had to be.

The policy of the Commission is carried out by the chief executive officer, the General Manager, who is appointed by the Commission and who attends Commission meetings but may be requested to retire for some part of a meeting. The division between policy-making and executive is, as in most organizations, far from clear cut and often, as the General Manager, Talbot Duckmanton, says

"quite important decisions, sometimes involving policy must, because of the time factor alone, be decided at the relatively low levels in the organization."<sup>15</sup>

He continues

"We have to train our people to think like those who are running the organization and not like those who are being run."<sup>15</sup>

The Commission is not responsible to any minister and the power of the Postmaster-General over the A.B.C. has been steadily pruned since 1942 when the Act underwent its first major revision. From this time, any requirement of the Postmaster-General to broadcast material, or to refrain from broadcasting material, had to be in writing and recorded in the Annual Report to Parliament. The situation when Archie Cameron, who was Postmaster-General in 1939, is alleged to have told the chairman of the A.B.C.

"Forget your charter, I don't believe in Boards, and Commissions - I believe in ministerial control."<sup>16</sup>

is unlikely to recur.

The 1932 Act had given to the Commission

"the power to determine to what extent and in what manner political speeches may be broadcast"<sup>17</sup>

but did not indicate that these matters were exempt from the control of the Minister. In the 1942 Act "subject to the provisions of this section" and therefore not affected by the provisions of any other part of the Act, the Commission had power over not only political speeches, but also over "any matter relating to a political subject". In 1948 "all controversial" was added after political so that now,

with changes to accomodate television, the section, "now Section 116(1), reads

"Subject only to this section, the Commission may determine to what extent and in what manner political matter or controversial matter will be broadcast or televised by the Commission ,"<sup>18</sup>

Section 116 has however become rather long, it has six sub-sections many of which are further divided, and restrictions on the material broadcast continue until Section 123. They include prohibitions on blasphemous, indecent or obscene material, on material in code and provisions for records to be kept of political or current affairs broadcasts. Thus the Postmaster-General's control over the material broadcast or televised by the Commission is severely curtailed.

Section 77 may say

"Subject to this Act, the Minister may, from time to time, by telegram or in writing, prohibit the Commission from broadcasting or televising any matter or matter of any class or character, specified in the notice, or may require the Commission to refrain from broadcasting or televising any such matter"<sup>19</sup>

but Section 116 (1) gives only to the Commission power over political and controversial matters and it is unlikely that any politician would wish to control material other than that which was political or controversial. (This of course in no way impairs any attempts at informal control).

The power of the Postmaster-General over the A.B.C. is continuing to be pruned. The most recent amendments (assented to 29 March 1971) change Section 40, concerned with the delegation by the Commission of any or all of its powers but only subject to the approval of the Minister. Ministerial approval is no longer required and the number of people to whom the power can be delegated is increased.

An interesting exception to control by the Postmaster-General or the Commission occurs in Section 122 under which talks on medical subjects must have their texts approved by the Director-General of Health

or some medical officer to whom he has delegated this power. This does not mean, however, that the various State Health Departments are inundated with queries about health broadcasts as well as requests for their authorization, for the Director-General of Health has issued guide lines for people preparing medical talks and medical advertisements. These are incorporated into both the Broadcasting Programme Standards and the Television Programme Standards published by the Australian Broadcasting Control Board.

Political intervention in the operation of the A.B.C. decreased considerably during the early years of the Menzies government, but any hope that this was a permanent situation vanished in 1960 when problems arose over Australia's membership of Intertel. This organization was formed in October 1960 to promote better international understanding through well produced current affairs programmes. One main aim was to preserve impartiality so that programmes would be produced by countries not involved in the situation examined, for example the programme on Cuba was to be prepared by Canada not by the United States. Australia was to produce a programme on Canadian:United States relations to be called "Living with a Giant". In March 1961 script writer Rohan Rivett applied for approval of his trip to America to collect material, as must all Commonwealth employees being sent overseas on official business, to the Overseas Travel Committee which refused his request. Sir Richard Boyer was unable to have this decision reversed as Cabinet declared that

"relations between the United States and Canada were so complex and delicate that it would be unwise for the A.B.C. to attempt a feature on the subject. The Prime Minister himself...would be unwilling to utter a public pronouncement on this issue [Canadian:United States relations]".<sup>20</sup>

By this statement Cabinet showed its belief that the A.B.C. should act as a Government department - that which the Government would not do, the A.B.C. would not be allowed to do - thus forgetting that the A.B.C. was supposedly an independent body, all for fear of upsetting a powerful ally. The A.B.C. considered withdrawal from Intertel, but in 1962

a method of staying a member but leaving open opportunities for Government and Commission consultation was devised. When the "Living with a Giant" programme made by the British Associated Rediffusion group was screened in Australia there were no objections, nor indeed were there any elsewhere.

Soon after this a Dr. Peter Russo spoke of United States' lies over Cuba in a news commentary and not only was Dr. Darling, then Chairman of the A.B.C., summoned to a conference with the Prime Minister, but security visits were paid to A.B.C. offices.<sup>21</sup>

March of 1963 saw a strange example of overt Government intervention similar in its reason to the Intertel example. The B.B.C. had sent to Australia a televised interview with a M. Georges Bidault, a representative of a group which advocated the assassination of President de Gaulle as a solution to French political problems. The Government decided that screening the film would endanger relations with France, a partner with Australia in SEATO, so it banned the film from both A.B.C. and commercial television. The interview could still be shown in cinema newsreels and reported in the newspapers and the inconsistency of this attitude caused objections which finally led to the ban's being lifted.<sup>22</sup> There is no record of a change in Australian:French relations.

This attitude of the Government, that A.B.C. programmes could affect international relations, came to be so accepted by the Commissioners that in June 1964, Dr. Darling was reported as saying

"There are subjects which because of their international and national importance and because of the inevitable lack of knowledge available to the officers of the A.B.C. and the Commission, we do not like to touch. Portraying Sukarno is an example. For newspapers and commercial stations it may be alright but not for the A.B.C., because we are regarded as a government instrument. Of course this is not correct. The A.B.C. is subsidised by the Government yet it is an independent body."<sup>23</sup>

This is an example of the way in which Government intervention does not have to occur over frequently with regard to the same type of

material. Akin to a Pavlovian learned response, the Commission, having been berated three times for causing, or attempting to cause, embarrassment to Australia's foreign relations, and being a trifle quicker than the dogs of the original experiment, now recoiled from becoming involved in possibly controversial international issues, without needing the Government to intervene.

The major example in the early Sixties of pressure, possibly including governmental pressure, being brought to bear on the A.B.C., concerned a Four Corners programme on the R.S.L. Some of the contributors to the programme were highly critical of the R.S.L. A rather unusual aspect of the programme was that the executive producer appeared as reporter where usually the executive producer, who is the person directly in charge of the programme, does not appear on camera at all. The response from the R.S.L. was a large number of angry complaints from rank and file members as well as state officials. The Federal Office made a formal protest to the Chairman of the A.B.C. The controversy was quickly taken up and spread by the newspapers. Many unofficial complaints were made by state branches to the Prime Minister, whose office requested the script of various Four Corners programmes. The Prime Minister and the Postmaster-General had also received copies of the letter of protest sent to the A.B.C. Chairman, and the Postmaster-General had been asked to inquire into the matter.

During the controversy the A.B.C. removed the executive producer, Alan Ashbolt, replacing him with Gerald Lyons who had been compere of the Four Corners programme in question, but had disassociated himself from the content of the R.S.L. film. Although this might have been, as was claimed, merely an unfortunate time to make a move that had been planned previously, it is unlikely that the A.B.C. would be unaware of the inferences drawn from choosing this time for replacing Ashbolt. To replace a man being widely criticised for producing an unbalanced programme (in some quarters it was considered pro-Communist) with a man who had publicly disassociated himself from it and thereby appeared to side with the R.S.L., could not but give substance to the charges of outside intervention. There is no doubt that the A.B.C. was under pressure, but whether it replaced Ashbolt because it was felt that this

would ease the pressure by using him as scapegoat or martyr is uncertain. It is certain, however, that they did not regard Ashbolt as having committed a heinous crime for by June of 1964 (the programme had been broadcast in late 1963), Gerald Lyons was in Melbourne as a Talks Assistant and Alan Ashbolt was still officially the executive producer of Four Corners, though his powers seemed restricted and he still had not returned to the credit list at the end of the Programme.<sup>24</sup>

Ashbolt regained his position but it was a slow and rather quiet movement suggesting that his temporary replacement was a public gesture. He was also involved in the next instance of political intervention in late 1964, but here public reaction was not so vocal because the intervention resulted in the programme's not being broadcast. Again the Commissioners seemed to have learnt to become sensitive to criticism and therefore timid and unadventurous. A Four Corners team headed by Ashbolt had gone to Western Australia to film a documentary on the hanging of mass murderer Eric Edgar Cook, to be shown two days before his execution. The Western Australian Opposition, although it had an anti-hanging policy, asked the Western Australian Government to try to get the A.B.C. to stop the screening, an attempt which was successful. Mungo MacCallum, however, says that the pressure was imposed by the Western Australian member of the Commission, H.B. Halvorsen, not because there was any controversial material in the programme, for a programme on hanging had been shown by the Perth A.B.C. station a few days previously, but because it created a bad image of Western Australia in the Eastern States. He cites this as but one instance of unnecessary interference by Commissioners in programming because of parochial sensitivity. Apparently the Tasmanian representative had also complained over a programme discussing the proposed legalization of abortions in the state.<sup>25</sup>

Other instances of intervention or alleged intervention, include a prohibition on Four Corners' filming of the Indonesian takeover of West New Guinea; the dismissal of the arranger of the programme Any Questions following complaints by Church groups, and a Senator, over insulting references to the Queen, discussion of schoolgirl pregnancies and the presence of agnostics on the panel<sup>26</sup>; the cancellation of a documentary on Aboriginal assimilation caused by the withdrawal of



funds when it was discovered that significant examples of discrimination had been found in N.S.W. country towns; and restrictions placed on Ellis Blain following his comments on the cost of stamps after decimal currency conversion.<sup>27</sup> These examples follow the already established pattern - Government intervention for fear of upsetting another nation, pressure group influence (in this case the Church), possible parochial concern over a national image (the N.S.W. discrimination case) - although the last example given may merely have been due to the sharing of the brief for both A.B.C. and Post Office (and therefore stamps) by the Postmaster-General.\* The interesting development in this list is not the subjects but the method used to curtail examination of Aboriginal assimilation - the removal of funds. This is the main method that can be used by the Government to ensure control over the A.B.C.. Not only can they actually withhold funds, but they can also threaten so to do. Thus the source of very real Government control may be seen to be the Commonwealth Public Service Board which can refuse to allocate funds for specific programmes. Even if the A.B.C. is not to have complete control over its source of revenue, but have it appropriated annually by the Government, this system whereby it cannot even control the allocation of the money that has been appropriated is iniquitous, begging for abuse and at times even being abused.

In May of 1967 the A.B.C. Chairman, Dr. Darling, was replaced, although he seemed to be not only capable of continuing for another term, but also eager to do so. There was considerable speculation about the reasons for this, as the given one, Dr. Darling's age, did

\* Another recent instance of a control dispute involving the Postmaster-General, occurred when the Executive Producer of the Sydney-Melbourne TDI programme, Tony Ferguson, screened an interview critical of the Post Office despite a veto on it by his superior. Apparently there had been considerable concern among some A.B.C. employees that programmes about Post Office operations were consistently refused screening, presumably because the A.B.C. is the concern of the Postmaster-General.

not appear wholly acceptable. It was felt that he had been showing too much independence particularly in the past two years, when he had ceased to react so 'correctly' to Government pressure and had in fact said, in an address at Sydney University that

"the A.B.C. had to be the voice of the nation representing all points of view and not merely those of the party in power."<sup>28</sup>

Apparently a section of Cabinet wanted him replaced with their nominee presumably to act as their puppet, but Dr. Darling asked that he be allowed some voice in the appointment of his successor. It appears that his request was agreed to and his deputy, Sir Robert Madgwick, appointed.

In November 1968 there were again charges of political interference when the A.B.C.'s contract with Bob Sanders, whose People programme had been running for ten years, was not renewed. (The A.B.C. uses the contract system for many of its creative personnel whose abilities must be paid for at rates above those of the Commonwealth Public Service.) Public concern, whipped up or even created by newspapers, grew to such heights that the Postmaster-General had to read a statement by the A.B.C. Chairman denying that there was political pressure of any kind involved in the decision. No definite charges were made against Sanders although it appears that his style of interviewing and sensitive conscience had enabled some of the interviewees to make political capital out of their portion of the programme.<sup>29</sup> The apparently baseless charges of political interference indicate the extent to which public belief in interference by the Government with the A.B.C.'s had grown. Any unexplained or untoward happening could be ascribed to pressure applied from without, and what more powerful pressure group than the Government?

Attacks on the A.B.C., particularly for alleged bias in current affairs programmes, continued in 1969. Complaints were made by B.A. Santamaria, John McEwen, Les Irwin and Dr. Malcolm MacKay, or, in other words D.L.P., Country Party and Liberal Party political figures. At the beginning of August, Sir Robert Madgwick, in an address to a

Melbourne Legacy meeting, declared his confidence in the professional standards and integrity of those who controlled current affairs, but at the next meeting of the Commission significant administrative changes were made. Current Affairs was placed directly under the control of the Assistant General Manager, W.S. Hamilton, a move not regarded as showing altogether a total faith in professional standards and integrity for Hamilton had been closely connected with News and still considered that he had a special interest in this field. Current Affairs and News tend at times to be regarded or to regard themselves, as rivals albeit friendly ones. Consequently the move indicated a wish for a more sober approach, such as that of News, to Current Affairs whose attempts at liveliness may have led to potentially dangerous areas.

Undoubtedly the programme most to suffer from political intervention, or from charges of it, has been Four Corners. This is hardly surprising since it is the longest running current affairs programme and is supposed to be provocative in approach. Thus when a programme or part thereof fails to go to air, or a staff member is sacked, there is always more intense investigation or speculation about possible political reasons for the action. Thus the termination in late August 1971, by the A.B.C. of its contract with Michael Willesee, who had been anchor man for Four Corners for some time and the dismissal of Bob Ellis, a script writer for Four Corners as well as other programmes, was publicised by various media and even carried by the A.B.C. News itself. The reason given for these terminations - that they had been working for people other than the A.B.C. - does not seem adequate when the words of Talbot Duckmanton, written in 1966, are remembered

"Many of our creative people must be allowed the opportunity to keep up to date in their profession.....by writing for literary magazines and newspapers, by composing music for release by commercial publishers".<sup>30</sup>

This surely indicates that employment by the A.B.C. will not be regarded as exclusive of all other employments or remunerative activities. The Deputy General Manager, Clement Semmler, uses his administrative skills within the organization and his skills as a

music critic outside, while Bill Peach is the compere of the Sydney-Melbourne TDE and writes for The Nation Review. Thus it is tempting to believe that Willesee, who had been conducting a 'talk-back' programme on commercial radio in the absence of its regular host, Crnsby Wilkins, was dismissed for other, possibly political, reasons. Speculation at the time claimed that the last interview he conducted, about the Sunday Australian article by John Gorton, following his fall from power, showed a Government Minister, J.C. Wentworth, in a bad light, and that this could have contributed to Willesee's dismissal. However it appears that Willesee was specifically forbidden by the A.B.C. management when his contract came up for renewal, to undertake the 'talk-back' programme and his dismissal came because he ignored this directive.

Bob Ellis' dismissal does involve possible political motivation. It did not involve the public examination that Willesee's had because, as a script writer, Ellis was not in the public eye to the same extent. It is easier however to examine the charges against Ellis because three of them involve the magazine Nation which subsequently published his dismissal notice.<sup>31</sup> The notice refers twice to an article Ellis, who usually acted as television critic for the magazine, had written for the April 17, 1971 issue on an A.B.C. documentary Tam Biot Sydney on American servicemen on R. and R. in Sydney. In the article Ellis mentions that he saw an uncut version of the documentary which included a serviceman telling the interviewer

"Every battalion has its little My Lai. Everybody kills somebody they don't have to. Whether they realise it or not."<sup>32</sup>

When the programme was broadcast, this was cut although Licutchant Calley had just been sentenced to hard labour for life over the original My Lai and the segment would have been very topical. It is possible that here again the A.B.C. were acting to avoid any possibility of upsetting a powerful ally. It appears likely that Ellis was dismissed for embarrassing the A.B.C., not only because it had removed this reference and had been shown publicly to be responding to the wishes - whether voiced or implicit - of the Government, but also

by his other writings.

The dismissal notice also includes a charge concerning an article in The Bulletin in June 1971 in which Ellis is musing on the likelihood of his dismissal and the stupidity of the A.B.C.. One can hardly expect his employers to relish his comment that

"The average 45 year old A.B.C. administrator, after twenty years of medicinal claret lunches, was probably quite literally entirely devoid of logic."<sup>33</sup>

The article catalogues many instances of A.B.C. timidity and short-sightedness: the creative people who fled to England because their work was continually rejected, the material by Patrick White which was never used and the comedy series by Charmian Clift and George Johnston which is still shelved. This article shows that Ellis expected his dismissal because of his writings uncomplimentary to some A.B.C. personnel, so the political reason, though probably influential would not have been the major reason. For both these people, political intervention as a reason for their dismissal can only be regarded as a marginal possibility.

It must be remembered that any case of intervention that becomes public is a case in which something has gone wrong. Wholly effective intervention must always be secret and if possible prior to the event. Dismissing an employee or censoring the Commission are undesirable ~~because~~ because they are public actions. It is well to recall the words of an anonymous A.B.C. employee to Ian Moffit of The Australian

"The A.B.C. operates within a framework of fear in which the pressure is on to avoid the controversial - to balance an issue so heavily that you gullify it, or skirt it altogether. It is not necessarily open and dramatic. A telephone call or a casual word in a club can presumably trigger action at the top to kill initiative below."<sup>34</sup>

The most important part of this is the reference to telephones and clubs, the unofficial, untraceable, unrecorded influences on the people who have power in the organization that can cause the cancellation of a programme, the alteration of its viewpoint or the changing

of its personnel.

In a discussion with a member of the Four Corners team the power of the telephone call was emphasised. It appeared that phoning the General Manager, or threatening to do so, was a standard weapon used against the programme although its effectiveness depended largely on the individual involved. An example was cited of a planned programme, prior to the 1969 Federal Elections, where three politicians were to be questioned by an audience of first-time voters. A Minister, who was one of the politicians invited, discovered that the audience would not be screened beforehand and phoned the General Manager complaining about being asked to face a group that could be composed of communists and maniacs and asking that the programme be stopped. The General Manager agreed without even consulting the Executive Producer. However similar tactics tried by industrialists and businessmen have failed,

The same interview revealed that attempts by management to vet programmes before they go to air can fail either through lack of knowledge of which statements really are damning or through the fact that management men usually have a background in radio - if they have a media background at all - and so are unable fully to comprehend the visual medium. This latter point can mean that management is unsympathetic to television as it lacks complete understanding of it and views it with suspicion. In radio, which presumably they understand more fully, there is much less concern about controversial programmes and much more rarely is there comment about managerial interference in the work of the creative staff. This could be because they are aware of the various surveys that show that television is the most believed medium and radio the least.

Frank Moorhouse, in a pamphlet written on the A.B.C. in 1970, describes its present mode of operation as heterodox and explains

"In public affairs and information, the heterodox approach involves exploratory treatment of public affairs, the provision of a vehicle for examination of moral and political attitudes frequently offensive to those generally prevailing.<sup>35</sup>

He also quotes the present A.B.C. Chairman, Sir Robert Hodgwick's explanation of the reasons for political concern over provocative programming.

"Thought is subversive, it challenges the established order. It is a danger to settled ways of outlook and behaviour, to dogma, traditions and assumptions."<sup>36</sup>

If these two attitudes were more widely accepted and the duty of public broadcasters held to involve the stimulation of thought which surely the 'inform, educate and entertain' trio of widely promulgated and glibly quoted aims include, then the interference with the operation of the A.B.C. by Government, pressure groups and individuals should change. If it were accepted that thought was dangerous (but necessary) and that the A.B.C., merely because it was established and is financed by the Government, does not necessarily have to reflect, and should even challenge, Government attitudes, then perhaps the niggling little complaints about failure to be objective or about attempts to undermine established institutions or beliefs would be curtailed.

When one considers that the governing body of the country directly controls the finances and indirectly controls the appointment of the senior staff, by their having to be approved by the Commission which itself consists of political appointees, it is somewhat surprising that the A.B.C. retains the measure of independence in programming that it does. What is desirable is a change in the method of financing the A.B.C., perhaps to the B.B.C. system whereby a large percentage of the licence fee money goes directly to the B.B.C. which can increase the licence fee if it is necessary to do so. Under this system no body seeking to influence the broadcasters can do so under threats of withdrawing finance.

#### The A.B.C. News Service

The early history of the A.B.C. News Service is characterized by disputes between the A.B.C. and the newspapers. With the commencement of A.B.C. operations in 1932, the Commission entered into a gentleman's agreement with the Australian Newspaper Conference (now the Australian Newspaper Council). As the A.N.C. was not a corporate body there could be no legal contract. The A.N.C. agreed to allow the A.B.C. to use newspaper material but only under certain stringent conditions designed to keep news broadcasting under newspaper control. World news, for example, could not be used until at least an hour after

publication and the A.B.C. could not break new stories or build up old ones between newspaper editions.<sup>37</sup> In late 1938, the B.B.C. offered the A.B.C. relay rights to its short wave broadcasts beamed on Australia, but Australian Associated Press claimed that it owned the Australian rights on most of the material used in these broadcasts, and the Government being unwilling to become involved in legal battles, the A.B.C. Chairman, W.J. Cleary, was advised to stop relaying the B.B.C. news.<sup>38</sup>

An unpublished paper prepared by the A.B.C. on their news services tells of the next step.

"The first reportorial staff journalists appointed by the A.B.C. took up duty in May 1939, as a direct consequence of a series of what the Prime Minister of the day (the late J.A. Lyons) regarded as misrepresentations in the daily newspapers. The issue concerned the belief that the Lyons Government was planning to introduce a standing Army in Australia..... Mr Lyons repeatedly issued denials, but the story was just as frequently reiterated in the press. As a result, the Prime Minister requested that the A.B.C. appoint a staff journalist, independent of any newspaper, to cover Federal Government and Parliamentary news. From the date of that appointment, the A.B.C. took no further news from the newspapers in the Federal field, despite agreements with the newspapers which permitted this and other news to be taken from newspapers and used by the A.B.C. in its news bulletins."

During the Second World War, with the A.B.C. collecting some of its own Australian news and the public avidly listening to their news bulletins, the newspaper proprietors fearing the loss of an audience, charged the A.B.C. with being merely the spokesman of the Government. A series of parliamentary committees investigated the newspapers' charges and the A.B.C.'s wish to establish a totally independent news gathering service. The main problem to be overcome concerned the cost of this which had been estimated as being at least £60,000 a year.<sup>39</sup>



Following various delays and changes of both Prime Minister (Menzies to Curtin) and the A.B.C. Chairman (Cleary to R.J.F. Boyer), the Act was amended in 1946 to give the A.B.C. power to organize its own independent news service. The Act then, as now, said

"66-(1) The Commission shall broadcast daily from all national broadcasting stations regular sessions of news and information relating to current events within the Commonwealth and in other parts of the world.

(2) The Commission shall employ an adequate staff, both in the Commonwealth and in overseas countries, for the purpose of collecting the news and information to be broadcast in pursuance of this section.

(3) The Commission may also procure news and information relating to current events in other parts of the world from such overseas news agencies and other overseas sources as it thinks fit."<sup>40</sup>

The problem then was to obtain a suitable source of overseas news, remembering that A.A.P.-Reuter has sole Australian rights to most news material. By chance it was discovered that the exclusive contract British United Press had with A.A.P. was due to expire and unlikely to be renewed in the same form. This knowledge helped the A.B.C. arrange a contract with Associated Press and Reuters. Six hundred country correspondents throughout Australia were engaged and on June 1, 1947 the independent news service began.<sup>41</sup> The most important aspect of the news situation was that no news was to be taken from newspapers and the A.B.C. had to be responsible for the accuracy, authority and impartiality of the news broadcasts.

The overseas news now comes by three main means: by teleprinter from A.A.P.-Reuter and United Press International (UPI), by monitoring overseas broadcast services and by cable, telex and voice report from staff journalists overseas. These latter are expected to seek news and background other than that provided by the agencies. There are also supplementary services such as Singrad. - a Reuter service for Southern Asia transmitted to the Melbourne A.B.C. offices. A.A.P.-Reuter receive

in Sydney, the full services of Reuter, Associated Press of America, the New York Times News Service and UPI services as well as services bringing in world sporting and financial news. A.A.P+Reuter selects material from this but it is not designed for specific clients, rather it is designed to cover the needs of all. UPI receives in Sydney from the central Asian office in Hong Kong but adds material from, for example, Djakarta. Cable sub-editors in Sydney examine the intake, re-writing useful material to suit the broadcasting style. This material is channelled to the various states and includes any material particularly of interest to that state. Stories that appear relevant to them are offered to other A.B.C. sections - for example, science, education and religion.

The A.B.C. News Service publishes a News Directive which is revised every few years and contains policies on various matters, style guides and a formal definition of the aims of the A.B.C. News Service.

"The aim of the A.B.C. News Service is to broadcast radio and television news essentially as a service to the people. We do not accept the news values of the popular press. We do not use news solely for its sensational interest. We aim to provide news of which the people ought to know if they are to take their place as intelligent members of the community. We must be factual, objective, impartial and balanced, and always in good taste. We seek the progressive news of society rather than the sensational news of the day. We exclude nothing, but evaluate everything and we select news by the A.B.C.'s own standards of evaluation. We do not exclude crime, but we do not use crime stories simply for listener interest. We look for the social value in crime and court stories, remembering that people in particular cases are entitled to know how the police force is working, how society, through its courts, is dealing with crime within the community.

But there are many crime and court stories that we do not want. They are not important enough in the terms of our values. News that affects the lives of the people in a positive sense

is always important - news about new laws; international affairs; schools; education; medicine; scientific advances; transport and traffic safety; roads; health and hospitals; churches and religion; community efforts; agriculture; commerce; national development; migration; social benefits; food; prices and wages; parliament and local authorities - the list is unending."<sup>42</sup>

The Directive is apparently largely the creation of the assistant general manager (until early 1971), Mr Wally Hamilton, described by The Australian as "The Homies of some of the current affairs staff".<sup>43</sup> The scope covered by the directive is very wide, ranging from minutiae such as the reminder that the Royal Horse Guards is the only Guards regiment with the word Royal in their title, to such major matters as the method of covering a Federal election.

During the study of the Hobart newsroom it appeared that the staff held quite strongly to the dictates of the Directive and no doubt so rigid a manual of operations is necessary for the production of a common style of service over the three million square miles of Australia. In fact the News Editor, whose role is akin to newspaper editors rather than newspaper news editors, seemed rather aggrieved when it was suggested that strict adherence to these dictates was both unlikely and unwise. The tone of the document is very revealing in that the A.B.C. news is to be treated very reverentially. For instance, under "Opinion" the Directive states

"The A.B.C. does not have any opinion. It reports facts and other people's opinions. The field of opinion is very wide. It is probably true, for instance, that the annual show of a country town "was a success", but the A.B.C. cannot say it. If there is nobody we can quote, but our correspondent is quite confident that the show was a success, we allow him to say it "the A.B.C. correspondent says that the show was a success" "<sup>44</sup>

The control this document could, and to a considerable extent does, have over the production of A.B.C. news is considerable. Although none

of those employed work with it on their desks or refer to it over frequently, it forms a basic and important part of their training until, one imagines, it becomes second nature to obey its dictates. Some of the staff in answer to questions on their work and opinion unconsciously appeared to quote the directive in either word or spirit.

The organization of the News Service is described in the unpublished paper referred to above in examination of the history of the Service:

"The affairs of the News Service are contained within the News Division. The officer in charge of the News Division is the Controller, News Service, and he is responsible to Management for the efficient running of the News Division. The Division is subdivided into two Departments - the Radio News Department and the Television News Department and each of these departments is run by a Director [The Director of News (Radio) and the Director of News (Television)]. The two Directors work to the Controller, News Services. There is also a fourth officer, the Supervisor of News Gathering, who is responsible to the controller for the co-ordination of radio and television news, the planning of special projects and the supervision of news-gathering activities by the overseas staff. These four officers carry Federal responsibilities and are stationed at Head Office in Sydney.

In each State, outside N.S.W., there is a News Editor responsible to the Controller for the activities of the News Service in that particular State. There is also a News Editor for the Radio Australia News Service and he is based in Melbourne."

Further detail about the actual operations of a newsroom will be given in the section devoted to the A.B.C. in the case study.

The importance of the achievement of balance is continually emphasised both by personnel and the Directive. If in an interview a complaint is levelled against someone, that person is contacted before the interview is used, if at all possible, and asked for his reaction

so that both charge and refutation<sup>or</sup> explanation (if one is made) can be broadcast together. However if it proves impossible to contact the person concerned in the charge, this does not mean that the original item is omitted. As the Directive says

"Balance may be arrived at over a series of bulletins, or over a period. But it must be a clear objective, and it must be attained overall".<sup>45</sup>

During election campaigns balance is of course much more important and again the Directive is explicit about it

"Director of News (Radio) laid down that balance had to be in like bulletins. That is the morning bulletins had to achieve their own equilibrium, also the midday broadcast and so on".<sup>46</sup>

As the Assistant Chief-of-Staff pointed out it would be foolish to pretend that a point raised in the main breakfast news could be balanced in the very early morning or late night bulletins. The Directive has more to say with regard to balance under the heading "Politics"

"The principles of balanced and impartial reporting apply with emphasis. It is well to bear in mind that by the very nature of things, the hard news of politics will flow mainly from the government of the day. Because of this, you should look for opportunities to present news from the opposition of the day".<sup>47</sup>

Despite the rigidity of the Directive, its pontifical tone and the respect in which it is held by those who train cadets, there is a definite attempt to stop the reporter acting as a gatekeeper in the flow of news, by deciding that certain information would not without alteration be in accordance with A.B.C. policy (unless of course it is Obviously of the type already proscribed) for the Directive states

"slanting is forbidden. But this means too that reporters should not seek to twist a story along the lines they think the office might want it or try to meet some imagined policy rule".<sup>48</sup>

Thus the control within the A.B.C. News Service is exercised largely, as in most organizations, by training. Because the A.B.C. is

such a far-flung organization with considerable internal mobility (staff are encouraged to apply for positions in other parts of Australia in order to widen their experience but only if the position is a promotion), training is standardized by use of the Directivewhich is a distillation of traditions and habits of established A.B.C. journalists. Day-by-day control exists on rather a low level - the News Editor and all above him in the hierarchy being primarily administrative personnel who handle only such problems as are referred to them by their subordinates.

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The Australian Broadcasting Control Board

In 1905 the Wireless Telegraphy Act gave the Postmaster-General complete control over all aspects of what was then termed Wireless Telegraphy. Section 5 of the Act said

"Licences to establish, erect, maintain or use stations and appliances for the purpose of transmitting or receiving messages by means of wireless telegraphy may be granted by the Postmaster-General for such terms and on such conditions and on payment of such fees as are prescribed."<sup>1</sup>

Until 1942, regulations under this Act were the only controls on commercial broadcasting, while the A.B.C. was governed by the provisions of the Australian Broadcasting Commission Act 1932. The Joint Parliamentary Committee on Broadcasting - known as the Gibson Committee - recommended in its report in 1942 that both national and commercial services be governed by the one piece of legislation. Later that year the Australian Broadcasting Act 1942 came into force. The Gibson Committee had also recommended that a Parliamentary Standing Committee on broadcasting be established. This was done and the Standing Committee was to concern itself primarily with the A.B.C. although it would investigate all matters submitted to it by the Minister or by the resolutions of either House of Parliament. As is so often the case, its recommendations were ignored and its activities became negligible.

The actual regulation of commercial broadcasting was carried out by the Wireless Branch of the Post Office which was far more concerned with the technical aspects of its task than with those concerned with programme control and direction. In fact, unless considerable pressure was brought to bear on them, programmes were ignored altogether. Pressure from government and public usually resulted in the issuing of a circular explaining the official view on specific matters. In all, during the eighteen years in which the Wireless Branch had this power, it issued only 47 circulars and many of these were repeated statements.<sup>2</sup>

Dissatisfaction with this system arose in many quarters. The

Australian Federation of Commercial Broadcasting Stations, founded in 1930 and with a membership of all Australian commercial stations, was fearful that a Labor Government would either take away all commercial licences or place them under the control of the A.B.C.. In 1936 they recommended that a board be established to issue and renew licences, fix wave lengths and power, and arbitrate in disputes involving all the stations. The Second World War prevented any action being taken on this, but after the war the dissatisfaction continued. The Post Office itself was only too willing to relinquish its power as it was fully occupied with the improvements to the postal services, and the proposed introduction of frequency modulation broadcasting (FM) and television were most unwelcome.

The Broadcasting Act 1948, the chief architect of which was the then Minister for Information, Arthur Caldwell, established the Australian Broadcasting Control Board as a statutory corporation whose functions were detailed in Section 6K(1) as

- "a) to ensure the provision of services by broadcasting stations, television stations and facsimile stations in accordance with the plans from time to time prepared by the Board and approved by the Minister;
- b) to ensure that the technical equipment and operation of such stations are in accordance with such standards and practices as the Board considers to be appropriate; and
- c) to ensure that adequate and comprehensive programmes are provided by such stations to serve the best interests of the general public."<sup>3</sup>

The second part of this section elaborated

"In exercising its function under paragraph (c) of the last preceding sub-section -

- a) the Board shall in relation to the programmes of the Commission consult the Commission and in relation to the programmes of commercial broadcasting shall consult representatives of licensees of commercial broadcastings; and
- b) the Board shall in particular -

- (i) ensure reasonable variety of programmes;
- (ii) ensure that divine worship or other matter of a religious nature is broadcast for adequate periods and at appropriate times and that no matter which is not of a religious nature is broadcast by a station during any period during which divine worship or any other matter of a religious nature is broadcast by that station;
- (iii) ensure that facilities are provided on an equitable basis for the broadcasting of political or controversial matter;
- (iv) determine the extent to which advertisements may be broadcast in the programme of any commercial broadcasting station; and
- (v) fix the hours of service of broadcasting stations, television stations and facsimile stations."<sup>3</sup>

It must be realized, especially in connection with 6K(2) iv, that at this time it was intended that television would be a national monopoly. The provisions under 6K(2), although no longer in effect (they were repealed in 1956), are very important, not only in directing the Board's attention in particular directions but also because one of them was instrumental in determining the extent of the Board's power and its relationship with the Minister. Calwell had stated in his speech introducing the Second Reading of the Bill that

"the Board will have to comply with government policy in regard to the general development of the broadcasting service."<sup>4</sup>

This aroused fears of complete political control and there was concern that the change in the Bill from specifying the Postmaster-General as the Minister in charge to merely referring to 'the Minister', meant that broadcasting would be transferred to Calwell's Department - Information.

One of the powers given to the Board was that of making orders which had the force of law but which had to be laid before both Houses of Parliament, either of which could disallow them by a resolution. On the eighth of September, 1949, the first Order of the Board was

issued. It resulted from the direction of 6K(2)iii regarding political broadcasts - no doubt the Board felt that with a Federal election due in December of that year, this was the most urgent of its duties. Political Broadcasts (Federal Elections) Order No.1 incurred the wrath of both sides of the House, largely because the Board had done what it probably regarded as the safe thing - followed the practices of the A.B.C.. This was after all what the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting had recommended in 1942. The Order stated that

" the licensee of each commercial broadcasting station shall broadcast from his station the whole of such of the addresses of the leaders of the parties or their nominees, as are broadcast on interstate relay by the Australian Broadcasting Commission during the election period"<sup>5</sup>

and defined 'part' as

" a political party on behalf of which candidates are nominated"<sup>5</sup>

The intense reaction to this was mainly due to the A.B.C's decision in 1936 to change its policy from one of broadcasting the speeches of leaders of parties which had at least five sitting members to one of broadcasting the speeches of the leaders of all parties with candidates nominated. One result was a quarter hour speech by a communist and it was this that had so incensed the members of the House.

Menzies, for instance, feared that it would become compulsory for a church station to broadcast the views of avowed atheists (i.e. communists). He called the whole order 'stupid', 'bumbledon' and an example of bureaucratism at its worst. Probably the most polite comment made during the debate was that of L.G.Haylen, the Labor member for Parkes, who said

"In my opinion the Australian Broadcasting Control Board attempted the impossible in the present state of political feeling throughout the world. It tried to apply democratic principles to an organization which is the utter negation of democracy - the Communist Party."<sup>6</sup>

Attacks were also made on the sections dealing with the division of time among parties and with broadcasts by organizations or persons

other than parties or candidates. The debate resulted in the issuing of Political Broadcasts (Federal Elections) Order No.2 which repealed Sections 4, 5 and 7 which had caused the complaints. In a strongly worded defence in their Second Annual Report, the Board said that they had formulated the Second Order because of a statement in the House that

"unless the main operative provisions of the Order were amended, steps would be taken to secure its disallowance in accordance with the Act"<sup>7</sup>

This was hardly an auspicious start to the Board's operations, but worse was to come. At the elections for which the Order had been devised, the Liberal Country Party coalition was returned to power and Larry Anthony, who had bitterly opposed the creation of the Board, was made Postmaster-General. This appointment was especially unfortunate for one member of the Board, Clive Ogilvie, for Anthony had attacked his appointment to the Board with considerable asperity. Ogilvie had been manager of 2CA Canberra and a director of the Macquarie Network, in which position he had arranged for Prime Minister Chifley to have regular free broadcasts to the nation. Anthony suggested that Ogilvie's appointment was a political quid pro quo and it was probably fear of this charge being substantiated that caused L.B.Fanning, ex-Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs to be appointed Chairman over the more fancied Ogilvie. The third original member of the Board was R.G.Osborne, only recently appointed Registrar at the Australian National University and previously a parliamentary draughtsman and lecturer in constitutional law. His was a surprise appointment and it was believed to be because he had neither political friends or enemies to disqualify him. He was recommended by (Sir) Giles Chippindall for whom he had worked in the Department of War Organization of Industries.

Anthony had also attacked the expenditure of the Board and Menzies had promised that if elected, he would straighten out the mess of Control Board, Commission and Parliamentary Standing Committee all concerned with the same things. In view of this, it is hardly surprising that the Board members expected to lose their jobs. However Anthony restricted himself to stopping the Board's plan for State Offices (Head Office was and is in Melbourne awaiting relocation in Canberra when accomodation

becomes available). He also directed the Board's attention to the possibility of increasing power to both National and commercial stations which had been clamouring for this for some time, and to increasing news services on commercial radio.

Although there is no evidence of unwarranted interference by Anthony, Ogilvie was aware of some tension between them and in June 1951 told Anthony that he would be leaving to look after his father-in-law's interests (derived in large part from the estate of the late Sir Hugh Denison). At a dinner to mark Ogilvie's departure, Anthony learnt for the first time that what Ogilvie would be doing was negotiating the sale of the Denison subsidiary, Broadcasting Associates Pty.Ltd., (comprising interests in ten radio stations) to M.P.A.Productions Ltd., owners of the London Mirror and the Melbourne Argus and its three radio stations. As Government policy was opposed to so many of Australia's commercial radio stations being controlled by overseas interests, Anthony came under strong criticism despite (or possibly because of) his having no prior knowledge of the situation.

This did nothing to improve relations between the Board and the Postmaster-General, for Anthony felt that the other Board members, especially the Chairman, should have told him what was happening. It was believed that this was the main reason for Fanning being given leave of absence until March 1952 when his three year term expired. Osborne became Acting Chairman and Bruce Mair, who had been Director of Technical Services for the Board, was appointed to fill one of the vacancies. The reluctance of the Government to appoint a third member to a Board which had already proved something of an embarrassment, meant that from July 1951 until May 1953 Osborne was in complete control, for as Chairman he had the casting vote. His power was further increased in January 1953 by his appointment to the Royal Commission on Television whose report was largely his work, due to the absence of its Chairman, Professor George Paton, during most of the sittings. A third member was appointed only following complaints by the Broadcasting Federation about the extent of Osborne's power, as Mair had been ill during the meetings between the Board and the Federation earlier in the year. The pattern

of Government disinterest or dislike and strong internal control by the Chairman was established. In 1954 the Government amended the Act to allow for two part-time members of the Board to be appointed, but as these had no specific duties (Mair was in charge of technical matters and Osborne of administration and in the absence of a third Board member - as happened again all through 1955 and 56 - of programmes as well) and Board meetings became monthly rather than weekly, their power was not very great.

Also indicative of the low degree of independence of the Board, was the problem of relay stations. In 1951, thirteen stations were operating by relaying programmes from a larger centre of population. This had originated because the areas were too small to support commercial stations, yet sufficiently highly populated to require a commercial service. In its Third Annual Report, the Board expressed dissatisfaction with the situation, declaring that the local community was not being adequately served and saying that it had urged

"the licensees of the thirteen stations concerned to devote an increasing proportion of the time of their relay stations to programme items of district interest until approximately one quarter of their programmes is so occupied"<sup>8</sup>

This was not pursued with any force by the Board for some time and in fact mention of relay stations was omitted from Board annual reports for a number of years because the Government had no intention of backing the Board's demands in this area. The listeners to relay stations were receiving a service that was satisfactory in its area and moves to force local content would not be popular with a considerable number of electors. The latest Board report - the twentyfourth - does take up the subject of relay stations again, noting with pleasure the moves of some of the relay stations, now number eleven, to increase local programming.

The Broadcasting and Television Act 1956 altered the section of the Act dealing with the functions of the Board so that no longer were the specific duties in regard to programme control delineated. Instead of the old Section 6K2(iii) which gave the Board power to devise a policy on political broadcasting, the 1956 Act specified provisions itself.



Postmaster-General Davidson said in his speech introducing the Second Reading of the Bill that

"the royal commission [on television] expressed the view that the obligation of the licensees of television stations in respect of political matter should be directly stated in the legislation and not left to the exercise of administrative discretion of a Statutory body"<sup>9</sup>

The provisions applied to both broadcasting and television and it must be remembered that R.G.Osborne, the Board Chairman, was the main author of this Royal Commission Report. He was obviously determined on avoiding a recurrence of the Political Broadcasts (Federal Elections) Order No.1 disaster if at all possible. A major new power given to the Board by this Act was that of holding inquiries, not only for the issuing of licences but also into any other matter that the Board saw fit or the Minister directed. This Act finally repealed the provisions creating the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting which had not met since 1948.

The next major event in defining the Board's power occurred in September 1958 and concerned the allocation of television licences in Brisbane and Adelaide. The Board recommended that only one licence be granted in each city and that new applications be called, but it was directed by the Government to grant two licences per city and to choose from the existing applicants. The Board obeyed the Government's decree.

There is no doubt that the Board's meek acceptance of the decision of the Government, affected both future relationships with the Government and its image to the industry and the public. There was some talk that the Board should have resigned rather than submit to the Government so tamely. Yet it is difficult to see what would have been gained by resignation, or the threat of it, apart from the possibly more equitable relationships between the Government and the Board - not really a great possibility. One of the functions of the Board was to advise the Minister and this they had done - nothing in the Act or even in discussion about it said that the Minister was bound to accept their recommendations; as the existing applications were mostly by the large newspaper

groups it is difficult to see how their resignation would be publicized and without publicity it would have been pointless; lastly the tradition of resignation in situations like this just does not exist in Australia, it is entirely over-ruled by the traditions of survival at all costs and looking after number one. Thus rejection of the Government's decision did not really offer a viable alternative. Cole points out that there was another factor complicating the issue - a forthcoming Federal Election, which although at first would appear useful from the Board's point of view, (public discussion of an issue like this would not be welcomed by the Government) was unlikely to be of any but very short term assistance, for if the Government were returned to office, the Board would be even more unfavourably regarded, and if Labor were returned, they had already indicated their intention of dispensing with the Board.<sup>10</sup>

Since the appointment of Anthony as Postmaster-General, the Board's projected expansion to the position of having offices in each state had not occurred, but in 1956 (with Anthony no longer in power) permission was given for the Board to establish some offices in Sydney. Further expansion had to wait until 1960 when the Public Service Board agreed to the creation of eleven new positions on the Board's establishment, to set up State Offices in Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Hobart. Senior Engineers were appointed to Sydney, Brisbane and Adelaide. Permission was probably given at this time because the expansion of television necessitated closer supervision. The Government had also realized by now that the Board had its uses - as a scapegoat on which to blame unpopular decisions and as a delaying mechanism to which to refer difficult or sensitive problems. With this realization has come greater Government sophistication in dealing with the Board - no longer would there be public embarrassment from the Board's actions for it had learnt its place and understood its duties. For instance, the Board's report on its investigation into the introduction of frequency modulation Broadcasting (FM), made during 1957-8-9, was never submitted. Cole quotes Osborne as telling him this was because it was such a farce;<sup>11</sup> the Government knew what it would do regardless of the report. So soon after the Brisbane and Adelaide television licences affair, the Board

did not again wish to appear a nonentity in regard to the Government's activities, so it simply forgot the investigation, which was not proving particularly worthwhile anyway.

The Broadcasting and Television Act 1965 took away from the power to regulate the establishment and operation of networks, but this was not so much a reflection on the Board as on the legislation itself which was believed to be open to debate. The new section of the Act containing the network provisions, Section 134, gave the Governor-General power to make regulations not only concerning networks, but also concerning the relaying of programmes, restrictions on the availability of programme rights and interference with transmission and reception. It also gave power to the Commonwealth Industrial Court to review the regulations. This section became virtually a portmanteau one designed to give power to the Governor-General (and thereby the Minister) that would help to resolve problems that had occurred previously. From the Control Board annual reports, it appears that no regulations concerning networks have been made and that, in fact, the Board does retain some power over them, for each broadcasting station licence includes a condition requiring the Board's consent in writing before the licensee may enter into any network or similar organization.

On the second of March 1966, R.G.Osborne's term as Chairman of the Control Board ended. As he would have been of retiring age in 1968, it was expected that his appointment would be extended until then. However this did not happen and the official explanation was that his health was not sufficiently good to permit it. Very few accepted this as the real reason, for, although he had been ill in 1964, he appeared to be fully recovered. It was believed that the Government wanted a more tractable successor. The appointment which they made would have been controversial if the Board had been better known, for the new chairman, Myles Fortunatus Evelyn Wright, had been General Manager of radio station 3AW. Although an appointment from within the industry to the Board was welcome, there was considerable doubt about it being to the position of Chairman. The last member from the industry had been Clive Ogilvie, but the embarrassment he had caused the Government had obviously been forgotten. Myles Wright was a past Federation President and was therefore highly aware of the details of the industry and its relationships with the Board,

but he must also have been aware of the Federation's tendency to discount the Board if possible and deal directly with the Postmaster-General.

In an article on his appointment, the magazine Nation points out the dangers of Board members being selected from the industry, but the dangers could in fact be applied to all Board members. If at the end of their term of office, members are likely to be seeking a job within the industry, and especially if they have offended the Government, they will need to be on friendly terms with the commercial stations' managements. This knowledge is not likely to aid a Board member in totally objectively pursuing his duties. The article also points out that

"Month by Month, members of the Board see a great deal of detail on the gross revenue of every commercial broadcasting and television outlet in the country. If a Board member were to return to one of the stations at the end of his term, he would bring with him a good deal of knowledge valuable in so competitive a game"<sup>12</sup>

#### ACTIVITIES OF THE BOARD

The Head Office of the Board consists of three divisions - Administrative, Technical and Programmes, and it is under these headings that the Board's activities will be examined.

The administrative functions of the Board are concerned largely with issuing and renewing broadcasting and television licences and ensuring that the shareholdings in broadcasting or television companies do not contravene the Act. During the early years of its operation, it was also concerned with the creation and implementation of an overall plan for the development of television throughout the country. For reasons that will be discussed with the technical functions of the Board, very few new broadcasting station licences are issued. The fifth annual report of the Board indicates the policy adopted with regard to the recommendation to the Minister to grant a new licence. This will not be done unless

- "a) a frequency channel is available for the station;
- b) because of the shortage of frequencies, the need for the

- establishment of the proposed station on technical grounds has been clearly established by a careful engineering survey of the area concerned;
- c) the ability of the proposed station to earn sufficient income to permit of its satisfactory operation in accordance with the provisions of the Broadcasting Act 1942-53 has been established;
  - d) The effect of the operation of the proposed station on the existing stations has been established;
  - e) the suitability of the applicants to provide a broadcasting service for the locality has been established;
  - f) generally, the licencing of the proposed station is in the widest sense, in the public interest, having regard in particular, to the broadcasting services already available."<sup>13</sup>

In the 24 years of the Board's operations, only 16 new commercial broadcasting licences have been granted, and seven of these have been issued in the last six years with the increased use of directional aeri<sup>als</sup>.

The initial granting of a licence is for five years, but after this period the licence must be renewed annually. The Act requires that the Board submit a recommendation to the Minister on each application for renewal. Recommendations are based on annual inspections and on the application forms which are designed to give information about possible changes in shareholdings which would place the licensee company in contravention of Division 2 of part IV of the Act, concerned with limitations of ownership and control. If the Board finds itself unable to recommend renewal to the Minister, or if the Minister so directs, it must hold an inquiry into the application. During 1969-70, the Board was dissatisfied with the operation of 2XL Cooma and in 1970 an inquiry was held about renewal of its licence. Following the inquiry, the Board recommended that the licence be renewed on the basis of undertakings given by the company and on continuation of satisfactory progress in the correction of technical deficiencies. The next year's report mentioned that the undertakings were being met.

The same procedure covers the renewal of television licences, and the criteria the Board uses in its selection of the licensee of a television station will be discussed in the chapter dealing with commercial television. At the end of 1971, the Board had issued 48 commercial television licences. The Board also issues licences for television repeater stations. These are located at various mining towns in Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory. The eight such stations in existence telecast programmes recorded on magnetic tape by the A.B.C. and air freighted to the stations. Local material used may only be short aural station identification and emergency announcements. The licencees of the repeater stations are Commonwealth Aluminium Corp.Ltd. (a subsidiary of Comalco), Dampier Mining Co.Ltd.(2), Hamersley Iron Pty.Ltd.(3), Mt Newman Mining Co.Pty.Ltd., and Groote Eylandt Mining Co.Ltd.. They are not, however, commercial ventures, but are deemed useful in keeping men at the mines.

Repeater stations are not to be confused with another concern of the Board - translator stations. The twenty-third Board report defines the latter as

"a relatively low-powered device which relies for its operation on the reception of signals from a parent station or another translator station and the retransmission of these signals on a different frequency channel"<sup>14</sup>

The aims of these stations is to improve or make possible a television service to areas of comparatively small population, normally beyond the range of an existing transmitter, or where the topography hampers good reception. By 30th June 1971, 43 commercial translator stations were in operation and the Board not only had to issue licences, initially for five years, to them, but had to renew them annually thereafter. 36 national translator stations were in operation at the same time.

The Technical side of the Board's operations were, at first, concerned primarily with two matters - the introduction of television and the increase of power to existing commercial broadcasting stations. Both of these have been accomplished and the technical division is now concerned with checking the operation of existing broadcasting and television stations, with possible means of increasing the present broad-

casting service and with the introduction of FM broadcasting and colour television. Frequently, comparisons are drawn between Australia with less than 200 broadcasting stations and the United States with approximately 4000. Why, ask the complainants, is the Australian public told that the medium wave band is full, when America manages to fit so many more stations onto the same band? Officially, the Board supports the Government view that the band is full for in political terms, though not in technical realities, it is. Many more stations could be accommodated on the band by a major relocation of frequencies, but this is politically unpractical. Radio dials are printed with the existing frequencies and the commercial stations are convinced (and have convinced the Government) that in the confusion that would follow relocation, everyone would be losers. They do not, of course, welcome the extra competition that relocation would allow. The other way to increase the number of stations is by the use of FM.

The introduction of FM broadcasting - which has superior fidelity, is almost free from static and resists the interference from machinery and electrical appliances which bedevils AM - was first investigated with a view to introducing it into Australia by the Gibson Committee. The Labor Government announced in 1948 that it was to be a national monopoly (as was also television at that time) and was to replace AM in capital cities as soon as practicable. The Government first introduced experimental FM stations in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, but it lost office soon after, and although the Liberals established a further experimental station in Brisbane in 1952, it was not really interested in FM, especially as the coming introduction of television would be so much more spectacular.

As the audio channel of television transmission uses FM, it was necessary to reserve some of the band for FM rather than let it all be used by television. Two channels were reserved in the 90-108 megacycle/sec. range, and the Board believed that the remaining nine channels would suffice for television. In 1956, the Government removed from the Act the section restricting FM to national stations and in 1957 the Board commenced an inquiry into its introduction. The outcome of this inquiry has already been mentioned. In 1958, various problems of channel allocation

arose, when it appeared that not all of the nine expected channels would be available for use by television stations. Channel 3 was used in coastal areas by the R.A.N., Channel 4 (132-139 megacycles/sec.) was used by the Department of Air who were supposed to vacate it by July 1963 but who wanted it until 1970. Channel 5 was also supposed to be vacated in July 1963, but the military wanted to retain it. Further complications were introduced by the 1959 Administrative Radio Conference of the International Telecommunications Union in Geneva which allocated the 132-136 range for aeronautical mobile services and the 136-137 range for space, fixed, mobile and earth-space services.<sup>15</sup>

In 1960 a conference was held at which technical matters arising from the development of television were discussed. One of the problems discussed at this conference was that of the allocation of frequency channels. The number of channels available could be increased by freeing those channels reserved for FM or by extending development of television onto the UHF band in which 45 channels were available. The Board's recommendations - among them that the present number of channels were sufficient for the time being, but that a plan for the future would have to be developed; that development within the UHF band left much to be desired; and that channels 3, 4 and 5 be made available as soon as possible - were referred by the Minister to a Radio Frequency Allocation Committee. Following their report it was agreed to use the channels previously reserved for FM, although 92-94 megacycles/sec. were to be used for fixed and mobile radio services such as taxis, fire and police. It was decided not to use the UHF band as although overseas countries had found it possible, there were technical problems in its introduction, as well as a smaller range and higher cost. To compensate for the loss of the reserved FM channels, the UHF band was allotted for the use of FM, although nowhere else had this band been so used and there were several technical problems to be overcome. The new frequency allocations allowed for thirteen channels with gaps between Channels 5 (101-108), and 6 (174-181). Presumably these gaps accommodate the frequencies used by the army, navy and the Department of Air.

In 1961, the experimental FM stations were closed down and in 1965



two licences for experimental FM stations in the UHF band were issued but there was no Government assistance for them. On the first of March 1971, there began yet another inquiry into FM broadcasting. Following the announcement of an introduction date for colour television, the Postmaster-General, Sir Alan Hulme, said that this meant that nothing could now be done to introduce FM radio to Australia.<sup>16</sup> As this statement was made before the presentation of the report, it appeared that once again the Board would be disregarded. The Postmaster-General seemed to be adhering to his statement of October 1964 that he was opposed to FM because agitation came only from a small group of enthusiasts, that it would have to be introduced on an Australia wide basis, that the only justification would be deficiencies in the present system and such as do exist at the moment do not warrant the introduction of FM, that the cost would be high and would restrict spending on other services such as television and that already existing VHF band FM equipment would be obsolete as FM would now operate in the UHF band.<sup>17</sup> However in 1972, the Postmaster-General presented the Board's report on Frequency Modulation Broadcasting to Parliament with a Ministerial Statement about proposed government activities. The Board had recommended the introduction of regional A.B.C. FM stations to provide an alternative national service to country listeners, of a 'fine music' station (FM) in each capital city, of commercial FM radio on the same lines as AM and of

"a new type of service, comprising FM stations to be known as Public Broadcasting Stations, which would be conducted on a non-profit basis, to cater for the needs of educational, religious, professional, musical and other like interests, but which would be available to the general public."<sup>18</sup>

Sir Alan Hulme declared that the government would implement the first three recommendations but was still considering the fourth.<sup>19</sup>

Much of the technical activity of the Board will now be concerned with the introduction of colour. On the 12th June 1970, the Board submitted a report on this introduction to the Minister, but he did not indicate when it could be expected, although he did say that there would be three years warning - the time the Board report had said would be

needed for stations to prepare. On 15th February 1972, the Postmaster-General announced that the starting date would be the first of March 1975. The Board has already decided that Australia will use the PAL (Phase Alternation Line) system and it has also established new system standards. It now has to revise the standards for the equipment and operation of television stations.

The last and most widely known division of the Board is that concerned with programmes. The development of actual Programmes Standards did not start until just before the introduction of television. The Board had been following the practice of the Wireless Branch in sending out circulars on specific issues, but it asked by the Postmaster-General to develop some television programme standards prior to debate on the Broadcasting and Television Bill 1956, as there was considerable concern about the harmful effects of television. The 1956 Act stated in Section 99(1)

"A licensee shall provide programmes and shall supervise the broadcasting or televising of programmes from his station in such a manner as to ensure as far as practicable, that the ~~programmes~~ programmes are in accordance with the standards determined by the Board"<sup>20</sup>

The section also gives the Board power to direct that any programmes not in accordance with the standards be varied so that they do conform. Unfortunately as with all the powers of the Board, it has no disciplinary powers with which to back up its direction or punish persistent infringements, other than that of refusal to recommend renewal of a licence which is certainly a drastic step. It has been pointed out that the Board could make use of its power to regulate hours of service as a disciplinary measure, but the Board never has done so.

The Television Programme Standards were first issued on the first day of July 1956 and were to be applied as much as possible to radio programmes while the Broadcasting Programme standards were developed. These were based on the television standards and first issued on the 6th of October 1958. They were developed in consultation with the Management Committee of the Australian Federation of Commercial Broadcasting Stations. In the introduction to the Television Programme Standards, it

is pointed out that many of the requirements are

"necessarily negative in nature and represent the overriding obligation of licensees to avoid televising programme material which can give offence to sections of the public or can be harmful to the young people who make up a large part of the audience at certain times of the day. Negative regulations may eliminate abuses; only the goodwill and prudent judgement of those who actually operate the stations and plan the programmes can ensure that television will be used constructively for the well being of the community."<sup>21</sup>

This is paraphrased in the introduction to the Broadcasting Programme Standards. The basic requirements are outlined in both sets of standards, though more fully for broadcasting as

"No programme may contain any matter which is

- i) blasphemous, indecent, obscene, vulgar, suggestive or of doubtful propriety;
- ii) likely to encourage crime or public disorder;
- iii) likely to be injurious to community well-being or morality;
- iv) contrary to law;
- v) of the nature of sex instruction [not present in the basic television standards]
- vi) -undesirable in the public interest because it includes matter of the same general nature as that referred to in sub-paragraphs (i) to (v)."<sup>22</sup>

The main divisions of the Standards are into Programme Standards and Advertising Standards and include an appendix outlining aspects to be followed with regard to medical programmes and advertisements. All matters of a medical nature must be approved in writing by the Director-General of Health or a medical officer to whom he has delegated this power, before it can be broadcast. Appeals may be made on the Director-General's rulings to the Postmaster-General.

Possibly the Board's major concern is with children's and family programmes and with programmes likely to be screened at times when children are watching. In fact, this concerned the Board so much that

it appointed a Children's Television Advisory Committee whose first report was presented in June 1971 entitled Production Guidelines for Children's Television Programmes. The report claims to be a compromise between the idealism of the Board's programme standards and the pragmatism of what the stations felt themselves able to produce. The committee was constituted following the promulgation of the new Australian content requirements, one section of which states that in each 28 day period

"Not less than four hours shall consist of programmes for children of school age, designed and produced in Australia under the supervision of persons qualified for this work and based on the recommendations contained in paragraph 15 of the Television Programme Standards"<sup>23</sup>

The recommendations referred to include; imparting a broader knowledge of Australian History and current affairs, fostering an appreciation of and participation in cultural and scientific pursuits, catering for a love of sports and hobbies, and

"by the use of great examples from the Bible and from History, biography and literature, to impart a real appreciation of the spiritual values and of the qualities of courage, honour and integrity which are essential to the full development of the individual and of national greatness."<sup>24</sup>

In the Advisory Committee's comments on this last recommendation, it seems primarily concerned with the reference to the Bible and frequently and specifically points out that religious items should be left for overtly religious programmes, that the Bible should be used as a source book only in the same way that other great books are used and that other religions should be similarly treated. One can sympathise with it in attempting to find practical ways to fulfill this recommendation while maintaining a degree of reality and audience attention and participation.

The Committee report details two further factors that children's programmes should encourage - recognition of the importance of individual differences and active participation by the viewer where possible. Despite the greater pragmatism of the report, the situation it outlines as desirable is a considerable distance from the present situation. Avoidance of precocity, especially in talent programmes, is certainly

yet to come. The use of junior talent programmes, quizzes and spelling bees only within other programmes, prizes given appropriate to the child and restricted commercialization of competition, avoidance both of lavish displays of wealth and stereotyped hero and non-hero figures, all these are yet to come.

One aspect of programming to which the Board's attention is specifically directed by the Act, is that of religious programming. Section 103 of the Broadcasting and Television Act 1942-69 says

"A licensee shall broadcast or televise from his station Divine Worship or other matter of a religious nature during such periods as the Board determines and, if the Board so directs, shall do so without charge."<sup>25</sup>

Both sets of Standards outline principles to be followed: for television, 1½ of the normal weekly hours of service or 30 minutes (whichever is the greater) each week is the minimum to be allocated, but this may be as one unit or several; for broadcasting, at least one hour a week must be scheduled for religious programmes again either in one or several units; for both media, station time shall be provided free of charge, but production costs may be claimed. This time shall be allocated among the various churches and denominations on the basis of the proportion of adherents in the service area. For broadcasting a provision is made that free religious programmes must be given preference in the selection of a suitable time-slot over sponsored religious programmes, while for television provision is made that religious programmes be prepared and presented by responsible people and must not ridicule any form of religious belief.<sup>26</sup>

In 1959, the Board established an Advisory Committee on Religious Programmes which until 1965 was only concerned with television, but has since been concerned with broadcasting as well. On the Advisory Committee's recommendation, the Board included in the Standards a list of different types of programmes, some of which must be broadcast or televised by a station free of charge. They include Divine Worship (preferably in a form adapted for broadcasting or televising), talks and discussions with religious intentions, feature material, documentaries or dramatised matter of a religious nature and short announcements on

religious or moral principles. In 1970 the Advisory Committee presented a report on Religion and the Broadcasting Media, and in the conclusions reached in this report recommended that the 1% of normal weekly transmission time requirement for television be dropped due to the inadequacy of so many religious programmes and the 30 minute requirement only remain, as well as the 60 minute broadcasting one. The report was generally critical of the existing use of the opportunities offered the churches, but was hopeful that the cooperation between religious programme producers and commercial television stations would lead to a more satisfactory state of affairs with religious matter not unduly isolated from other programme material such as by the use of advertisements during the programme. Previously the provision of free time had carried an implicit ban on advertisements during a religious programme, but the Advisory Committee felt that provided discretion was used in the selection of accompanying advertisements, - preferably institutional credits rather than hard-sells - and they did not actually interrupt a programme of Divine Worship, they would be acceptable.

Political programming which had proved so dangerous a matter in the first year of the Board's existence with the furore over Political Broadcasts (Federal Elections) Order No.1 is dealt with primarily by the Act. The main section dealing with this is Section 116, part 1 of which gives the Commission power, subject to that section, to control itself the political matter it broadcasts or televises. Part 2 of the section states

"The Commission or a licensee shall not broadcast or televise a dramatisation of any political matter which is then current or was current at any time during the preceding five years"<sup>27</sup>

This may seem rather a strange provision but its history does explain it. Originally it was only prohibition on the broadcasting of dramatised material during the election period. This was because in 1940, according to the Gibson Committee which recommended the introduction of the provision, one advertising company had used simulated German voices in a political party's election material. (Supposedly Hitler was saying how delighted the German people would be if Labor won the election). When

the Act was amended in 1948, the provision was extended because the Labor Government was then suffering under the onslaughts of a weekly radio programme sponsored by the Liberal Party in which a character called John Henry Austral ridiculed Labor's activities and simulated voices of Prime Minister, Chifley and many members of his Cabinet were used. Besides the ridicule, Labor was upset by the errors of fact presented and because it was devised by an ex-Labor public relations man.<sup>28</sup>

This is the only part of the political broadcasting regulations on which the Board Standards make any pronouncements. It explains dramatisation of political matter as any use of simulated voices or any representation by characters real or imaginary of any event, speech or conversation past or imaginary. All that is allowed is dialogue or discussion by actual people not pretending to be any other people, or quotations or factual pictures.<sup>29</sup> Even here the Board cautions that an authoritative ruling can only be given by a court.

The Act prohibits the broadcasting or televising of any election-matter between the end of the election period (from the day of issue of a writ for an election to midnight on the Wednesday preceding the day of the poll) and the close of the poll on election day. A 1969 amendment to the Act now allows the Board discretion to exempt - in writing - either the Commission or a commercial station from compliance with this requirement if the election is a local one (state or just of one or two House of Representatives members) being held in an area where the exempted station is not usually received. [Section 116 (5A).] This is a particularly interesting section in that it gives the Board power over the activities of the Commission. The same section, 116, provides that if any election material is broadcast or televised by a station then the licensee shall

"afford reasonable opportunities for the broadcasting or televising of election matter to all parties contesting the election, being parties which were represented in either House of Parliament for which the election is to be held at the time of its last meeting before the election period"<sup>30</sup>

Infringements of these provisions are investigated by the Board.

There are a number of other more minor matter over which the Board has control, such as the use of foreign languages on programmes,

contests and telephone interviews. On television, only occasional items may be in foreign languages - for example, educational programmes, incidental dialogue in dramatic productions, special occasion national programmes and local emergency warnings. For radio the situation is slightly different. A maximum of  $2\frac{1}{2}\%$  of a station's weekly transmission time may be in a foreign language, but the Board may increase this percentage if one station in an area served by several would serve a useful purpose by increasing its foreign language content. Adequate translation into English must follow both programme and advertising material and foreign language advertisements may be broadcast only during a foreign language programme. During the year ending 30 June 1971, station 2CH Sydney broadcast in foreign languages for about  $12\frac{1}{2}\%$  of its total time. Regular foreign language programmes are broadcast by eight metropolitan and fifteen country stations.

The regulations controlling contests, substantially are the same for both sets of Standards, are designed to ensure that advertisements do not pass as programme material and that people understand the rules of contests and do not waste time<sup>and money</sup> on contests that have closed. With regard to telephone interviews or conversations, requirements are set by the Post Office as well as by the Board. As is to be expected, the requirements of the Post Office are primarily concerned with technical matters and in particular with a device called a Recorder-Connector Type 1, supplied by the Post Office on application by the station. The purpose of this device is to emit a warning tone every 15 seconds so that a person may not be interviewed while unaware of it. The Board requires that the compere of talk-back shows, in which telephone conversations are most used, be competent to deal with the subjects discussed (or have access to those competent) and capable of interpreting the Board's requirements, that each contributor to such programmes gives his/her consent to his/her remarks being used, that any item not clearly intelligible not be broadcast, and that a system of checking before any item is broadcast, either by pre-recording the programme or by using a tape-delay mechanism which will enable the excision of undesirable comments.<sup>31</sup>



The Board also lays down advertising standards. These were originally based on standards adopted by the Federation in 1939, when it was feared that Postmaster-General Cameron would impose restrictions on them. Cameron had threatened to ban Sunday advertising but relented following the visit of a deputation headed by Father Neany of the Roman Catholic radio station 2SM.<sup>32</sup> Pressure for a ban on Sunday advertising continued and many representations were made to the Gibson Committee for this and the original draft of the 1942 legislation included some restrictions, but the Federation managed to convince the Minister that Sunday advertising should be restricted only at the Minister's discretion. The Sunday advertising clause of the Act now reads

"A licensee shall not broadcast or televise advertisements on a Sunday except in such a manner and in accordance with such conditions as the Board determines" (Section 100(5)).<sup>33</sup>

Special standards are set by the Board for Sunday advertising and they divide Sunday into periods with different rules as occurs for programming on a Sunday as well.

The Regulations for Sunday programming on television are at the moment under revision but they do prohibit the screening between 6.00 a.m. and 12 noon of programmes other than those approved by the Board and generally this means that Sunday morning programmes will consist of religious matter, educational material, charitable appeals, news, but not commentaries on it or sport replays and that usually such matter will be Australian in origin. One reason for the forthcoming revision could be the extreme dislike of the FACTS for these provisions and consistent complaints about them.

For this same period, television advertisements shall occupy no more than 6 minutes per hour and there will be no more than four groups of advertisements (of not more than three advertisements per group) in any 60 minute period. On Sundays, apart from this period, advertisements may occupy a maximum of 9 minutes per hour, no more than four advertisements may be televised consecutively during a break in a programme, although more may be used at the end of the programme. One shopping-guide programme may be televised between 12 noon and 6 p.m. For radio, the restrictions are generally not as stringent, although again the

period between 6.00 a.m. and 12 noon is subject to special provisions - for this period the same as for television apart from the slightly different restriction of no more than two groups of advertisements in any 15 minute period. Apart from this period, no more than 20% of the programme period may consist of advertising matter.

The normal radio advertising standards separate sponsored programmes and programmes in which spot advertisements are broadcast, such that 20% of advertising matter is allowed in a sponsored programme, but 30% is the maximum when spot advertisements are used. To avoid the situation in which heavy advertising is used at times of high ratings and compensated for by light advertising at other times (giving a daily figure of no more than 30% of advertising matter) it is further specified that no more than 18 minutes of spot advertising is allowed in any 60 minute period. Television advertising deals with peak-time viewing separately from other times. During the peak-time period, a maximum of 11 minutes per hour is allowed and at other times a maximum of 13 minutes. For both radio and television no more than four advertisements may be broadcast consecutively, although there is a provision that on television more than four may be broadcast at the end of a programme as long as the total time so occupied continues to remain within the permitted amount.

As well as the time standards, the Board sets standards of acceptability and general points to be taken into consideration in both the scheduling of advertisements and their manufacture. The standards give both radio and television station licensees directions to refuse to accept or transmit advertisements when they doubt the integrity of the advertiser or believe that the advertisement would prove objectionable to a substantial and responsible section of the community. They also indicate that particular attention should be paid to advertisements for alcoholic liquor, for products of a personal nature especially underwear, and for firearms and associated equipment. Advertisements relating to fortune telling and similar practices are not allowed and care must be taken that advertisements concerning betting or gambling or money-lending or speculative finance are within the law. One rather interesting provision states, in the Broadcasting Programme Standards

"No advertising matter should be associated with any actuality-programme in which the principle interest centres around a public appearance of any member of the Royal Family"<sup>34</sup>

For television the same provision is modified by being preceded by "Except where special permission has been granted"<sup>35</sup>

Other matters mentioned by the Board include the necessity to be able to distinguish between advertisement and programme material, the need to avoid disparaging competitors or their products or services and the importance of great care with regard to all advertisements broadcast or televised when children are likely to be a large part of the audience. The change in the requirements with the regard to advertisements associated with religious programmes has already been mentioned. A special provision for television advertising is that all televised commercials must be produced in Australia, although they can contain a maximum of 20% of the visual content which has been photographed outside Australia if it cannot be shot in the country, or the same amount of sound from other countries, again only if it cannot be obtained within Australia. It will be noted that nowhere is there any mention of restrictions on cigarette advertising. Despite the many calls for action by the A.M.A. the only restrictions on this form of advertising are imposed by the FACTS.

As mentioned earlier, all material - programme or advertisement - of a medical nature must be approved by the Director-General of Health before it is used. To aid in the production of both advertisements and programmes of this type, the standards for both media include an Appendix entitled "Notes on censorship of matters of a Medical Nature". The notes are designed to insure that truth is strictly adhered to, and that no exaggerated claim is made. In a section entitled "Decency and Ethics", the main concerns seem to be to avoid embarrassment among the audience (thus, for example, scabs, piles and body odour should not be mentioned), to avoid undue worry among the slightly unwell (therefore detailed or exaggerated descriptions of symptoms are forbidden), to avoid having people believe that conditions which should be treated by a doctor can be cured by proprietary medicines (here a number of diseases including cancer, croup and scabies is listed), to forbid reference to alcohol as

a medicine and to forbid the depiction of treatment real or apparent for various illnesses. The Notes also list a number of types of expressions which are forbidden, and these include rash generalizations, the use of superlatives especially in comparing competing products, the use of exaggerated or ambiguous claims and of claims purporting to establish mysterious or unique derivations of remedies. Finally there are a number of provisions designed to ensure that people are not led to believe that doctors or dentists are recommending the product.

Footnotes

1. Wireless Telegraphy Act 1905, Commonwealth Acts, Vol.IV, p 10  
During World War 1, the control of wireless telegraphy was transferred to the Naval Department for security reasons and as the Post Office was in no hurry to add to its controls, it was not returned until 1920.
2. B.G.Cole: The Australian Broadcasting Control Board and the Regulation of Commercial Radio in Australia since 1948  
Northwestern University Ph.D. 1966, University Microfilms Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan.
3. Broadcasting Act 1948, Commonwealth Acts, Vol.XLV1, p 340.
4. Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 13 Oct.-17 Nov. 1948,  
Vol.199, p 2984.
5. Second Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board,  
1950-51, p 38.
6. Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 7 Sept.-12 Oct. 1949,  
Vol.204, p 653.
7. Second Annual Report op. cit., p 22.
8. Third Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board,  
Year Ending 30 June 1951, 1952-53, p 18.
9. Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 17 April-24 May 1956,  
Vol. H. of R. 10, p 1539.
10. B.G.Cole: op. cit., p 85.
11. Ibid., p 150
12. "New Player, Old Part", Nation, April 2, 1966, pp11-12.
13. Fifth Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board,  
Year Ending 30 June 1953. p 5.
14. Twentythird Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board,  
Year ended 30 June, 1971, p 95.
15. B.G.Cole: op.cit., p 153.
16. "Colour TV and FM radio", Australian, 1 March 1972. p 9.
17. B. Cole: "What's really stopping the expansion of radio in Australia", Australian Quarterly, Vol. 38, No.3,  
Sept. 1966, pp 72-87. pp 84-85.

18. Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board on Frequency Modulation Broadcasting, June 1972, p 90.
19. Ministerial Statement of Frequency Modulation Broadcasting by the Postmaster-General, The Hon Sir Alan Hulme, K.B.E., MP, copy supplied by the Australian Broadcasting Control Board.
20. Broadcasting and Television Act 1942-1969, p 58.
21. Television Programme Standards, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1970, p 6.
22. Broadcasting Programme Standards, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1967, p 7.
23. Twentythird Board Report: op.cit., p 120.
24. Television Programme Standards, op.cit., p 11
25. Broadcasting and Television Act, 1942-69, p 59.
26. Television Programme Standards, op.cit., p 14, and Broadcasting Programme Standards, op. cit., pp 12-13.
27. Broadcasting and Television Act, 1942-69, p 65.
28. B.G.Cole (Ph.D.Thesis): op. cit., pp 339-43.
29. Television Programme Standards, Op. cit., p 17.
30. Broadcasting and Television Act, 1942-69, p 65.
31. Broadcasting Programme Standards, op. cit., pp 21-22.
32. "This was how the Pioneers began", Broadcasting and Television, September 19, 1963, p 13
33. Broadcasting and Television Act, 1942-69, p 58
34. Broadcasting Programme Standards, op.cit., p 26
35. Television Programme Standards, op.cit., p 25

CHAPTER 6COMMERCIAL RADIO

The early days of radio have already been dealt with in the preamble to the chapter on the A.B.C., but much that happened immediately after this is important in understanding the present situation of commercial broadcasting stations and the power of the Federation of Australian Commercial Broadcasters. Concern about the future of radio increased as soon as they were divided into A and B classes. The B stations, which were the forerunners of today's commercial stations, felt their second class status badly, and, indeed, people became so doubtful about their future and profitability that they were reluctant to apply for licences. This is one reason why newspaper companies do not dominate the radio scene as they do the television, and is also the cause of some of the government reluctance to clamp down hard on stations contravening regulations. Because in the 1930s the government talked some people and organizations into taking up licences, they now believe themselves to be under an obligation to these people. R.R. Walker quotes a story about the Industrial Printing Co. (now the Industrial Printing and Publicity Co.), a Melbourne Labor Party and Trade Union offshoot, being given a licence but not knowing what to do with it. They arranged for the licence to be offered for lease to anyone who could be considered to be interested, but with little success until Val Morgan (now concerned primarily with theatre advertising) and M.G. Sloman (then associated with Hoyts Theatres) formed the 3KZ Broadcasting Co., which still runs the station despite efforts to dislodge it.<sup>1</sup>

The reluctance of people to take up licences was not only due to the belief that radio was a passing and not very profitable phase. As Mackay says, during the thirties

"the broadcasters had few friends, the government handled them with tongs; the A.B.C. remained aloof; the press, having overcome a degree of initial hostility, quietly bought into certain metropolitan stations, but were quick to attack if they thought the new medium invaded any of their preserves. Sports bodies acted as though the commercial broadcasters were already wealthy and could pay high fees

broadcasting rights and tried desperately to prevent broadcasts from many of their meetings."<sup>2</sup>

Possibly some of the strength of the F.A.C.B. is the result of this early isolation causing the existing stations to band together to combat it.

Throughout the thirties, commercial stations were harassed by stern government regulations tabled without debate such as Regulation 59 which said

"All matter including advertisements to be broadcast shall be subject to such censorship as the Postmaster-General determines<sup>3</sup> There was no appeal against such decisions. Perhaps it is fortunate that the Wireless Branch of the Post Office was less concerned with programming than with technical matters. However this latter concern handicapped the commercial broadcasters, for their transmitting power was limited to 15 miles, while the A.B.C. stations were allowed a much greater range.

Considerable public sympathy for commercial radio was evinced in December 1938 when, without any warning, the Postmaster-General, Archie Cameron, ordered 2KY off the air and cancelled its licence because he resented the remarks made in a news commentary about a particular Minister. Even newspaper editorials were decrying this high-handed action as bureaucratic dictatorship to such an extent that the next day Cameron had to declare that he would return the licence following the publication in Sydney Newspapers of an apology. Both were done, but the public response and the spirit of unity engendered in the industry by the Minister's action helped to strengthen the position of the commercial broadcasters. Conditions continued to improve and when the Gibson Committee presented its report in 1942, it noted that there were 99 commercial stations in existence and 695 unfilled applications for licences.<sup>4</sup> The report also notes that it had become necessary in 1935 to devise regulations limiting the number of licences held by one person or company. At first the maximum permitted had been

- "a) one metropolitan broadcasting station situated in any State;
- b) Two metropolitan Broadcasting stations;



- c) three broadcasting stations situated in any one State; or
- d) five broadcasting stations situated in the Commonwealth."<sup>5</sup>

Five weeks after they appeared, a revised form of the regulations was published as various bodies and individuals had pointed out that those measures were too restrictive. The new regulations retained a) and allowed four metropolitan stations in the Commonwealth, four in any one State and a Commonwealth total of eight.<sup>5</sup> These restrictions still apply.

During the war, some commercial stations were affected by the National Security Regulations. These stations were all owned by the Jehovah's Witness organization. In 1941, the organization was declared subversive, and an order dated 7th February, 1941 put its stations (5KA Adelaide, 5AU Port Augusta, 2HD Newcastle and 4AT Atherton) off the air. Somewhat of a scandal resulted from this action, not only because the National Security Regulations which declared the Jehovah's Witnesses subversive, were themselves declared invalid by the High Court of Australia in 1943, which awarded damages to the Jehovah's Witnesses, but also because some of the licences made available by the Government action were granted to new organizations under suspicious circumstances. The two South Australian licences were granted to a company formed by the Central Methodist Mission and The Workers Weekly Herald (a South Australian Labor journal). The former would hold four-fifths of the shares and the latter would hold the remainder, but the £8,500 purchase price was apparently all paid by the Central Methodist Mission. The Labor Party was to receive free time each week for its broadcasts.<sup>6</sup> During the debate on the Australian Broadcasting Bill 1948, this matter was brought up and (Sir) John McEwen added to the charges, saying

"Mr. Alderman [the lawyer negotiating the sale of the stations for the Government] then attempted to dispose of station 2HD Newcastle and he entered into negotiations with the Church of England - churches being his speciality. He discussed the matter with the Anglican Bishop of Newcastle, Dr. Batty. The Bishop rejected the terms of sale and exposed them in the course of a letter to a Sydney newspaper."<sup>7</sup>

The terms of sale were again that the Labor party should have a one-fifths share and one director out of five on the Board and also that the

Labor Party would be given free station time. McEwen charged further that having failed in this endeavour, the Labor Party still managed to have a 16 $\frac{2}{3}$  interest in the eventual successful licensee.<sup>7</sup>

During the war the position of the commercial stations was improved as the government realized the extent of their influence by their extensive selling of war bonds and raising of other large amounts of money for the progress of the war. At the same time commercial station managements and the Federation were pressing both for improvements in their security of tenure (licences had to be renewed annually) and increases in the transmitting power they were allowed. Reference has already been made to the disparity between the power permitted to be used by the A.B.C. and by the commercial stations. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting, appointed following the Gibson Committee Report in 1942, in its first report examined the commercial stations' request for power increases. After a preamble emphasising the great difference between the national and commercial services, the Report says

"As pointed out by the Post Office, any claims on the part of the commercial system for parity of treatment with the national system in the matter of operating power and choice of radio channels is untenable....If commercial stations were required to duplicate the kind of services provided by national stations in some very sparsely populated areas, they would be financially embarrassed"<sup>8</sup>

They also rejected the claims because they believed the increased costs of increased power would result in increased prices of the commodities advertised on the stations. Commercial stations were not heartened by the news on the same page of the Report that channels in use at that time could soon be freed by the revocation of certain existing licences.<sup>8</sup> When this was combined with the decision to have a Government monopoly of television and FM, fear of nationalization once again arose.

Thus it was with some relief that the industry greeted the emergence of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board with one of the more powerful of their members sitting as a board-member of the Government body. One of the first concerns of the Control Board was to investigate the Federation's request for more power and to grant increases. The

first Annual Report of the Board in 1949, expressed dissatisfaction with the standard of service available in country areas and its determination to improve the situation by such means as increased power, the use of other wave bands and possibly by the rearrangement of the existing frequency allocations.<sup>9</sup> The third Board Report outlined the conditions under which increases would be made and recorded that 56 commercial stations already had been authorized to transmit on a higher power. The Board decided to retain a ceiling of 2000 watts and to alter the frequency allocations as little as possible. (It will be remembered that on becoming Postmaster-General, Anthony had directed the Board's attention to increasing power but had avoided any reference to changes in frequency allocation). One factor inhibiting the increase of power in some cases was an agreement with New Zealand on shared frequencies. Thus some stations received permission to use increased power in the daytime only.<sup>10</sup> In 1953, the power of capital city and Newcastle commercial stations was also increased, in some instances up to 5,000 watts. It was in this year that the ban on commercial FM radio was removed but as the industry was concerned with the introduction of television and the public were ignorant about FM, nothing resulted from this move.

The Broadcasting and Television Act 1956 eased another concern of the commercial broadcasters - that of their security of tenure. Prior to this time licences had to be renewed annually and there was no appeal, but amendments to the Act, while not extending the licence period did ensure that all cases of failure to renew a licence, except following failure to pay the licence fee, would involve a public inquiry by the Board.<sup>11</sup> In 1960 the Act was further amended - largely to strengthen the ownership and control provisions - to allow a person whose licence was revoked to appeal to the Commonwealth Industrial Court (Sec.87A).

Even before the introduction of television, the Board was commenting on the changes in programming, probably in anticipation of meeting the threat which some prophesied would destroy commercial radio. The many live programmes, quizzes, debates and what R.R.Walker terms 'chatter and song' programmes were replaced with recorded drama<sup>12</sup> presumably to be a direct challenge to television rather than presenting an alternative. The Seventh Annual Report includes an analysis of programmes of commercial stations in Melbourne and Sydney for a week

in the winter of 1954. In Melbourne 59.55% of the time was devoted to music while 7.70% was drama. In Sydney 53.49% was music and 9.23% was drama.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately no figures are available for the pre-Control Board period but it is interesting to compare it with the 1970-71 figures for all metropolitan commercial broadcasting stations combined. Light and popular music accounted for 49.7% of the time while drama occupied a grand total of 0.2%,<sup>14</sup> but by this time radio had learnt that it had to offer a different type of service - it could not compete directly. It is the Board's duty to ensure that a 'reasonable variety' of programming is provided for listeners particularly when two or more commercial stations serve the same areas. The Third Board Report expressed some dissatisfaction in this regard, but reports for a time after this expressed the usual tepid satisfaction together with noting improvement. One gains the impression that the Board was not all that satisfied but could see nothing they could do to improve matters so refrained from making any disapproving comments. The Tenth Board Report (year ending 30 June 1958) expressed some concern at the decreasing amount of drama on some Sydney stations as the result of television competition, but the next year's report said that this had been offset by an increase in daytime serials. This was regarded as pleasing because the Board had feared that the introduction of television would cause a reliance by commercial radio on recorded music and little else. On a local note it is interesting to read that in autumn 1960, Hobart commercial stations were broadcasting 41.7% music (by far the lowest of any capital city) and 25.9% drama (nearly twice that of any other capital city).<sup>15</sup> This was just before the opening of the first Tasmanian commercial television station.

The Fourteenth Board Report noted that the range of programmes had decreased and commented

"It is by no means adverse criticism to suggest that broadcast programmes now fall into the categories of music, news and services"<sup>16</sup>

Yet the rest of this paragraph sounded a warning note about the dangers of this limited range. The report for the following year expressed dissatisfaction with the increase in what it termed 'transient music',

called for a re-examination of programme policy by broadcasters and proposed discussions with the FACB to try to improve the situation.<sup>17</sup> The Board remained dissatisfied with the restricted range of programmes and available alternatives, but its discussions with the Federation only produced an explanation that the whole nature of radio audience behaviour had changed, due largely to the use of portable and car radios, so that listening to the radio was rarely an activity in itself but an accompaniment to other activities. Thus programming was perforce demanding less concentration and hence the change to transient music, news, weather and community service announcements.

Board Reports continued to complain mildly about programming. The Seventeenth (1964-65) reported the Board Chairman's address to the Thirty-Fourth Convention of the Federation at which he expressed his misgivings about some aspects of radio programming

"The particular areas of concern were the contraction in the range of radio programmes since the introduction of television, the great similarity between programmes on competing stations and the extent to which audience measurement reports influenced programme policies"<sup>18</sup>

Since the Eighteenth Report, The Board has been noting with pleasure an increase in the range of programming due primarily to the popularity of the talk-back type of programme, but there appears to be no indication that this greater variety is the result of any of the Board's actions, requests or consultations.

A possible reason for this failure of the Board to have any influence over the range of programmes is revealed in the evidence given by R.G.Osborne, then Board Chairman, to the Vincent Committee in 1963. Although the matter under discussion was the extent of Australian content in television programming, Osborne's statement that, even if he did consider a programming situation unsatisfactory, the Board had no powers to alter it because the disciplinary action except for prosecutions, belonged to the Minister,<sup>19</sup> apply equally well to radio programming. The Board has always been anxious to avoid prosecution, preferring it to be a threat, because there never having been a prosecution, no one is certain of the extent of the Board's powers and the likely conse-

-quences for offenders.

The Broadcasting Programme Standards are therefore the only apparent outside control on programming and as these give no directions about the variety of programmes and are concerned more with prescriptions to prevent offences against 'good taste' and an excess of advertisements, programme control is vested largely in the hands of individual station managements. There does exist a Code of Ethics formulated by the Federation but this is a combination of common sense - such as not denigrating the products or services of a competitor - with general statements similar to those in the first paragraphs of the Broadcasting Programme Standards, together with an agreement that radio stations will not broadcast anything which cannot be sent through the mails under the Post and Telegraph Act. This latter provision is largely unnecessary as such advertisements are unlikely to pass the Control Board restrictions. Even with the Broadcasting Programme Standards, the Board has some difficulty in enforcing their provisions. The Seventeenth Board Report includes under the section 'Broadcasting of Objectionable Matter - usually a stern statement that vulgarity will not be tolerated and that although the situation is generally satisfactory, several warnings have been given during the year - the atypical comment

"In one instance the continued failure of performers to comply with the directions of the station management, to refrain from vulgarity in a regularly presented programme, led to their dismissal"<sup>20</sup>

This referred to a somewhat scandalous situation in which the Board had made repeated complaints to a station over the objectionable comments of two talk show personalities and after a considerable time the station had fired them. They were promptly hired by a rival station. This situation caused so much comment that Osborne had to explain it at the October 1964 Federal Convention saying that the station kept breaking promises that the breaches of programme standards would be stopped until the Board threatened to take action against the station either by prosecution or by querying the renewal of the station's licence. The rival station that hired the pair following their dismissal was required by the Board to prerecord all their programmes and have them supervised by a responsible officer.<sup>21</sup>

NETWORKS

By the end of the 1930s, a number of stations had formed themselves into loose associations or networks to share the cost of programme production and to make easier the placing of national advertising. According to Mackay, in 1938 two big advertising agencies mainly American owned, had virtually created a network of the stations they patronized. This became the Major Network. To compete with this, some of the other stations banded together to form the Macquarie Network.<sup>22</sup> These two are still the main networks. The Gibson Committee in 1942 received many representations about the dangers of networks based largely on fear that the American system involving near monopolies and considerable corruption would become accepted. The Committee considered these fears unfounded at that time but warned that care should be exercised to prevent such a situation coming to pass. It was unlikely that a similar system could eventuate as the legislation enacted in 1935 restricting the number of stations owned by any one body would prohibit it.

Because stations enter network arrangements of their own freewill and are not sold into them, they are free to take all their programmes or only some of them or to leave completely. In 1947, Macquarie decided that all member stations would hold shares in the network rather than just being associated stations paying a commission on any business placed. Thus the present situation developed in which the Macquarie Network is a proprietary company, Macquarie Broadcasting Services Pty.Ltd., of which approximately one third of the shares are held by a wholly owned subsidiary Macquarie Broadcasting Holdings Ltd. and the remainder held by member stations. At present there are 18 members of the Macquarie Network. The Major Broadcasting Network is still an association of 15 stations with a number of others which co-operate with it while not being members (this situation applies to Macquarie as well).

A condition of the licence of each commercial broadcasting station is that the station will not join a network or similar organization nor acquire shares in such an organization without the consent in writing of the Control Board. Consequently each year the Board Report lists the existing networks and their members. As well as the two main ones already mentioned, there are eight smaller ones - two in Queensland, two in

Victoria and one each in the other states. With the reduction in the amount of drama and live variety programmes which were once the main productions of the networks who would hold such performers as Jack Davey and Bob Dyer under network contract, their importance with regard to programming has been reduced. They now tend to concentrate on sports and news but remain important for the placing of national advertising.

#### THE FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIAN COMMERCIAL BROADCASTERS

In 1930, the thirteen existing commercial broadcasting stations, formed the Australian Federation of Commercial Broadcasting Stations, an unregistered trade association whose main aim was, according to its constitution

"to protect, defend and conserve the rights and interests of licensed broadcasting stations individually and collectively."<sup>23</sup>

The major purpose in formation was to avoid strict Government control by appearing to be a self-regulating industry as well as to gain strength through unity. Almost immediately they introduced the Code of Ethics already mentioned and still adhered to. As they continued to fear Government control or even nationalization, the Annual Convention in 1936 recommended the establishment of a Board to regulate the industry and act as an area of common ground for Government and Federation activity.<sup>24</sup> When the Australian Broadcasting Control Board was finally set up, the Federation was delighted to see that it strongly resembled the body they had asked for, and included Clive Ogilvy, an important member of the Federation. Since the beginning, there has usually been a member of the Federation on the Control Board and in fact the present Chairman, Myles Wright was an active member before his appointment.

In 1939, the Federation adopted its own Advertising Standards in an attempt to forestall Government action and formed the Commercial Radio Advertising Board by combining Federation representatives with those of the Australian Association of National Advertisers and the Accredited Advertising Agents Association of Australia.<sup>25</sup> Following the end of the war, the Federation began the practice still existing whereby it has to pass all advertisements sent interstate for radio use



(note that FACTS does not indulge in this practice). A Federation approved advertisement carries a stamp to indicate approval, an approval number and the date of approval but individual stations may still refuse to use such an advertisement if they believe it to be offensive. The Creative Director of the advertising agency Monahan Dayman Adams Pty.Ltd., Philip Adams, complained about this recently pointing out that it was cumbersome and, as both the Board and the stations themselves could check that the public were not offended, redundant.<sup>26</sup>

The Federation also reviews newly released songs and advises stations whether to broadcast them and under what conditions. This was one of the matters discussed at the latest annual conference between the Control Board and the Federal Council of FACB. This conference was also concerned with greater opportunities for Australian musicians in commercial broadcasting and with advertising standards.<sup>27</sup> A study group of both Federation and Board representatives was to continue to investigate the former following the consultations. The Federation has a permanent research group associated with it; this is the Australian Radio Advertising Bureau (ARAB) which is concerned mainly with surveying on the effectiveness of commercials, the detailed composition of audiences and the comparative impact of radio and television advertising.

Because the Federation insists on unanimity before taking a decision it tends to be rather conservative, but this insistence may be an asset in making the broadcasting stations of Australia appear to be powerful and co-operative. The Federation certainly does have the appearance of substantial power when dealing with the Control Board although it is claimed that usually it bypasses the Board to deal directly with the Minister. Among the stations themselves it is at times a different matter. Some stations, although members, never attend Conventions or take part in the decision making of the Federation, others are sceptical of the value of participation, believing that they will get the benefits anyway.

For those active in the body, however, it is a forum which acts as a pressure group on Government, Control Board and other media organizations, which mediates with Trade Unions, which negotiates with

international bodies, which arranges national coverage of important events and which gives them a place to air their beliefs and hopes, for the concept of all media, commercial as well as national, being community-service organizations, is strongest among those who work within them, particularly at the top. Sir Lincoln Hynes, the Federation Chairman, speaking to the Tasmanian executive committee of the Federation on April 27, 1972, expressed this when he said

"It is my view that it is a privilege to be the recipient of a broadcasting licence in this country, or in any country, because of the great power in terms of influencing public opinion which is at our command. We have the power to influence consumer demand - we have the power that affects the very thinking of our society, irrespective of age group, of class or station in life. But if we are given this privilege and opportunity then I suggest it carries with it a responsibility to our community, which at no time should we disregard, nor place in jeopardy our right to hold such a privilege."<sup>28</sup>

Whether or not Federation members hold to this belief and act accordingly is uncertain, but this is a statement of the Federation's highest intentions and what it is aiming for in its activities. It is revealing that the first power mentioned is over consumer demand and the last thought about the loss of a licence for these are the two factors that have always held primacy in the Federation's activities.

Footnotes to the Chapter on Commercial Radio

1. R.R.Walker: Communicators, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1967. p 232.
2. Ian Mackay: Broadcasting in Australia, Melbourne University Press, 1956, p 117.
3. Ibid., p.
4. Report of the Joint Committee on Wireless Broadcasting 1940-41-42, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1942, p55
5. Ibid., p 56
6. Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates. Vol 180, p 1491
7. Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates. Vol.200, pp 3330-3331
8. First Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Canberra, 2 Feb.1942, p 20
9. First Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, 1949, p 8
10. Third Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, Year Ending 30.June 1951, p 10
11. Eighth Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, Year Ending 30 June 1956, p 8
12. R.R.Walker: op.cit., p 235
13. Seventh Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, Year Ended 30 June 1955, p 20
14. Twenty-Third Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, Year Ended 30 June, 1971, p 70
15. Twelfth Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, for Year 1959-60, p 20
16. Fourteenth Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, for Year 1961-62, p 19
17. Fifteenth Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, for Year 1962-63, p 23
18. Seventeenth Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, for Year 1964-65, p 23
19. Report from the Select Committee on the Encouragement of Australian Productions for Television, Part 11, Minister of Evidence, 1963, p 23

20. Seventeenth Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, for Year 1964-65, p 32
21. B.G.Cole: The Australian Broadcasting Control Board and the Regulation of Commercial Radio in Australia Since 1948, Nethereston University Ph.D. 1966, University Microfilms Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan.
22. Ian Mackay: op. cit., p 152.
23. B.G.Cole: op. cit., p.4.
24. Ibid., p.23.
25. Ibid., p.462
26. "Agency head attacks radio spots censorship", Advertising and Newspaper News, April 16, 1971. p.10.
27. Twentyfourth Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, Year ended 30 June 1972. p.28.
28. "Radio's debt to community", Advertising and Newspaper News, April 28, 1972. p.15.

CHAPTER 7COMMERCIAL TELEVISION

The first Australian commercial television station began operating on 16 September, 1956: it was TCN Sydney relaying programmes from a Surry Hills Church Hall. Although only approximately two thousand sets were licenced at the time, it was estimated that 40,000 people watched.<sup>1</sup> However, decisions affecting the present structure of television had been taken quite some years before this, although the first decision - that television should be operated as a government monopoly - a decision taken by the Labor Government in the late forties, was swiftly rejected by the new Menzies Government. At first the introduction of television was postponed for economic reasons. The Royal Commission on Television reporting to parliament in September 1954, rejected the proposal that television transmitters should be controlled and owned by a public authority and made available to programme companies, a proposition similar to the present British commercial television operation. The Commission also declared that "the objective of all television stations from the outset must be to provide programmes that will have the effect of raising standards of public taste".<sup>2</sup> This highly moral claim was, and still is probably, staunchly adhered to by the prospective licensees in their submissions to the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, but it seems only to be able to claim only the ineffectual Board as an adherent in practice (apart from empty mouthings by television administrators or directors on political occasions).

The introduction of television was to be a gradual process beginning with one national and two commercial stations in both Sydney and Melbourne. The Australian Broadcasting Control Board was given the task of recommending the most suitable commercial licensees to the Minister. It seemed as if the Control part of the Board's title might be warranted after all, for not only were they to recommend the licensees, surely a most important controlling task, but the Minister had said in the House that

"the responsibility for ensuring that television programmes are of a proper standard is being imposed on the Australian

Broadcasting Control Board which recently was strengthened with this objective in view... But I wish to make it clear that the Government will stand behind the Board in its administration and will not tolerate any abuse of the new medium by licensees or advertisers or any one else. This is a matter of vital importance which I know has caused considerable public concern. I give an unqualified assurance that every effort will be made to ensure not only that television will not cause any harm to the people of Australia, but that it will, as far as practicable, be a positive benefit."<sup>3</sup>

The doubt implicit in the last part of this statement did not tally very well with the earlier claim for the raising of the standards of public taste, but it certainly appeared that the Government would support the Board's actions and decisions. The extent of this support may perhaps be judged by changes made by the Minister to the conditions recommended by the Board for use in considering applicants for a licence. Those conditions changed by the Minister referred to the shareholding, directorships and duration of the licence, provisions such as those dealing with religious broadcasting, periods of operation and advertising were left untouched. For a successful application

"not less than 80% of the issued capital of a licensee company shall be held by Australian residents or companies controlled by Australian residents"<sup>4</sup>

and

"not more than 15% of the issued capital of a licensee company shall be held by any person who is not an Australian resident or by any company which is controlled directly or indirectly by persons other than Australian residents"<sup>4</sup>

Each six months declarations were to be made by the licensee that these two conditions were being upheld. The Board was to determine standards for technical equipment, periods of operation and standards to be adhered to in the presentation of programmes and advertising. The licence which the Board had wanted to grant initially for three years and

then renew annually had had its initial period extended by the Minister to five years.<sup>4</sup>

Other criteria used by the Board did not have the force of these which were backed by Ministerial decree and later incorporated in the Broadcasting and Television Act, but presumably were to be used to differentiate between applicants who had satisfied the previous criteria. The Board required

- "a) a good character and high reputation
- b) directors and executives with a proper appreciation of the responsibilities imposed by a licence and a willingness to comply with the conditions of it.
- c) a genuine intention to commence on high standards even at financial loss.
- d) financial stability and ability to absorb losses in the initial years without sacrificing programme and technical standards.
- e) a good record in allied fields of communications and entertainment
- f) ability to provide a satisfactory service"<sup>5</sup>

It was the combination of points d) and e) that led to our present system of very limited control. The requisite financial stability and experience in communications was to be found among few but the large newspaper companies who already had considerable radio interests. One of the Sydney licensees, Amalgamated Television Services Pty.Ltd., included among its major shareholders John Fairfax and Sons Pty.Ltd., Associated Newspapers Ltd., Radio 2UE Sydney Pty.Ltd., and Broadcasting Station 2GB Pty.Ltd., all companies with substantial Fairfax interests, if not totally Fairfax controlled. The other Sydney licensee, Television Corporation Ltd. had as its major shareholder Consolidated Press. In Melbourne, General Television Corporation Pty.Ltd. included among its shareholders David Syme and Co.Ltd. in which the Fairfax group have considerable interests, while Herald-Sun TV Proprietary Limited was a company formed by the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd.. Thus the stage was set for Australia's media oligopoly.

The second phase of television development witnessed an inter-

-esting if reprehensible instance of government disregard of the Board's recommendations. The Board was to recommend not only the successful applicants for the Brisbane and Adelaide licensees, but was also to recommend whether one or two licences were to be granted in each city. The Board's report to the Minister recommended

- "1) that fresh applicants be invited for one licence for a commercial television station in Brisbane and one licence in Adelaide;
- 2) that in the selection of a licensee in either city, so far as is practicable, the company will be preferred which is able to demonstrate that it is substantially locally owned and is not controlled in any way by any of the licensees for existing stations in Sydney and Melbourne or significant shareholders in those companies; and
- 3) that it be understood and if necessary be a condition of any licence for a television station in Brisbane and Adelaide that the licensee shall not enter into any exclusive arrangement with any other commercial television station for provision of programmes or the sale of station time or advertising".<sup>6</sup>

It gave reasons for these decisions claiming that local ownership was desirable while concentration of ownership or control of television stations, particularly in the hands of already powerful media groups was most undesirable. If two stations per city were established there would be a need for capital from existing stations, which would be inconsistent with recommendations 2) and 3), as would the immediate establishment of two commercial stations be inconsistent with the gradual introduction policy of the government.<sup>6</sup>

The government, ignoring totally the Board's recommendations, directed it to allocate two licences from the existing applicants. The successful Brisbane applicants were Brisbane TV Ltd., whose major shareholders included companies in which the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd, had substantial interests, as well as Amalgamated Wireless (A/sia) and Queensland Television Ltd., major shareholders in which were the licensee companies of ATN Sydney and GTV Melbourne. In Adelaide, the



successful applicants were Television Broadcasters Ltd. - Major shareholder Advertiser Newspaper Ltd. in which the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd. again had substantial interests - and Southern Television Corporation Ltd. a company formed by News Ltd. Rupert Murdoch's newspaper group. The Board's attempt to stop the media oligopoly was in vain and local ownership was incidental, for the Sydney and Melbourne stations had decided that the two licences in Brisbane and Adelaide were necessary for the protection of the profitability of their original operations and government intervention ensured that they got them.

In describing the irrelevance of the Board to the whole proceedings, Ken Davidson claims that the reason the Board did not choose one of the original applicants was not so much the lack of local ownership, as a knowledge that with the decision to grant only one licence the existing television licensees would wish to present joint applications for each city and the Board was giving them time to do this. In support of this claim, he quotes a memorandum from Sir John Williams of the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd. following a meeting between ATN, GTV, HSV, AMA and Macquarie

"it was agreed that if it became apparent that only one commercial licence would be granted in Brisbane, we should form a combined company out of the proposed groups"<sup>7</sup>

There appeared no doubt that the government would favour them. In Perth and Hobart there was no problem with the number of licences - one each - nor with the licensee companies - both newspaper controlled (by West Australian Newspapers Ltd. and Davis Bros. Ltd. respectively) . Both companies now are controlled by the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd.

The next stage in television development was its introduction to other than state capital city areas, such as Canberra, Newcastle, Hunter River, Ballarat and North-Eastern Tasmania. Apparently deciding that the large radio groups had obtained sufficient benefit from government patronage, the minister, <sup>declared</sup> in April 1959, that licences would go to local independent companies not associated with metropolitan stations. The Board decided that local independent companies must be controlled financially by residents of the area served and must be similarly controlled in their day to day management. Again the Board recommended only one

licence for each area, as with local ownership two stations would not be economically viable. In a further statement on the granting of country commercial licences, the Minister said

"the licences will also be subject to the condition that no exclusive arrangement may be entered into by the licensees with any metropolitan station for the provision of programmes or for the sale of station time or advertising."<sup>8</sup>

It appeared that now with the major capital city licences securely established under the control of a powerful few, the Government was to accept the previous recommendations of the Board and distribute the less lucrative markets to the comparatively poor and weak. Any hopes, however, that the Government was adopting a sensible approach to the allocation of television station licences were soon to be dashed.

On the 8th March, 1962, the Government announced that it was inviting applications for an additional television licence in all state capitals except Hobart. The Ministerial statement declared that

"In reaching this decision to invite applications for the additional licences the Government took the view that there was room in each of the cities for another commercial station and that the greater competition which would result would benefit not only the residents of the areas concerned but the ultimate development of television services of the Commonwealth as a whole."<sup>9</sup>

This would give Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide one national and three commercial stations, at a time when Great Britain had two national and one commercial and the United States three nation-wide networks- this despite their much larger populations. It was now policy not to increase the number of licences controlled by existing groups and, if possible, to give the licences to companies without newspaper interests. In establishing criteria for selecting the successful applicant, the Board sought to establish which qualities would ensue the best service in the public interest. It decided these would include:

- " i) competence in the sense of ability to carry on efficiently the business of a television station on the technical, managerial, programme and advertising sides. This includes

- the ability to provide commercial television programmes consistent with the principles embodied in the Board's standards and to maintain a service of high and improving quality, and the capacity to operate the station on a realistic financial basis in the face of competition from established stations;
- ii) stability both in finance and in management; the applicant should demonstrate clearly...that the constitution of the application offers stability over a fairly long period so that its proposals and promises may be carried out in pursuance of a consistent policy;
  - iii) good character, integrity and high ideals of the main sponsor shareholders, directors and proposed management as demonstrated by their records and by evidence given by them;
  - iv) imagination and intelligence in the presentation of programmes as demonstrated by the application and the evidence."<sup>10</sup>

The emphasis placed on financial stability and managerial experience dictated an established company, but the earlier requisite of experience in communications and/or entertainment had gone. The Sydney licence went to United Telecasters Sydney Ltd., the major shareholders in which were A.W.A., the Colonial Sugar Refining Company Ltd. and Email Ltd.. In Melbourne it was given to Austarama Television Pty.Ltd., a company formed by Ansett Transport Industries Ltd.. At this stage the Government believed Roy Thomson's statement that a television station was a licence to print money and hoped that by thus awarding the licence they would no longer have financially to support Ansett's airline operations. To ensure that the Board would be aware of the Government preference, Austarama presented the Board with a character reference from the Director-General of Civil Aviation. It also claimed that having had experience in operating under the terms of the Civil Aviation Agreements, its executives would find little difficulty in adjusting and adhering to the requisites of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board. This does appear to be in accordance with the Board's requirements about managerial ability but the financial stability could only have come from the guarantees inherent in the Civil Aviation Agreements - the company itself was not apparently noted for its financial stability.<sup>11</sup>

Ansett also applied for the third Brisbane licence but its application was rejected in favour of Universal Telecasters Queensland Ltd., a local company. Undaunted, Ansett bought a 48.9% interest in Universal Telecasters in a week's trading on the Brisbane Stock Exchange, thus making the process of allocating television licences even more ludicrous than it had been before. As some form of network would be needed to make his television operations more secure, Ansett obtained interests in the two companies which were to become the successful applicants in Adelaide and Perth - South Australian Telecasters and Swan T.V.Ltd.. Both the Brisbane and Adelaide licences were issued despite Board recommendations that no third licence be issued, because it would harm the existing system causing reduced local content and shorter hours of service.

#### CONTROL PROVISIONS OF THE ACT.

The Broadcasting and Television Act 1956 established certain limitations on ownership or control of commercial stations. The first of these (53A) stated that

"a person, shall not own or be in a position to exercise control either directly or indirectly, of more than -

- a) one commercial television station within the Australian Capital Territory or within a radius of 30 miles from the General Post Office in the capital city of a state; or

- b) two commercial television stations in Australia."<sup>12</sup>

Others required that 80% of the issued capital of the licensee be Australian owned and no more than 15% owned by any one non-Australian company or individual not resident in Australia, that half yearly statements of compliance with the previous requirements be made and that substantial changes in beneficial ownership of the shares of the company needed the approval of the Minister. In 1960 the Act was amended to extend greatly the section on control and ownership. The most important addition was Section 92B which defined a person in control as one who is

"in a position to exercise control of more than 15 per cent of the total votes that could be cast at a general meeting

of the company."<sup>13</sup>

Many provisions to be applied to the articles of association of a company generally to ensure compliance with the previous requirements were also included in the amendments, but the statutory declaration of compliance now had to be made only once a year.

By 1964 there was considerable dissatisfaction with the operation of the control and ownership limitations section of the Act which had deemed a person to be in control of a licence if he was in a position to exercise control of more than 15% of the voting rights. Various companies had overcome this limitation by arranging their articles of association such that regardless of the shareholding of an individual, his maximum voting rights would be 15%. The Broadcasting and Television Act 1965 was intended to correct this situation but as it was decided not to apply it retroactively it left the existing inequities unchanged, while making it more difficult for other groups to challenge those solidly entrenched at the time. For instance, Ansett's attempts to develop a controlled network to compete with the older established stations was halted, thus making economic operations even more difficult for him. The previous definition of control as amounting to more than 15% of the voting rights was replaced by a section in which a person was held to have contravened the section if he had a 'prescribed interest' in three or more licences or two or more in a Territory or State or within a radius of 30 miles of the G.P.O. in the capital city of a State. The 'prescribed interest' involved being

- "a) the holder of the licence;
- b) in a position to exercise control, either directly or indirectly, of the licence;
- c) in a position to exercise control of more than five per centum of the maximum number of votes that could be cast on a poll at, or arising out of, a general meeting of the company holding the licence, whether he is in such a position as regards all questions that could be submitted to such a poll or as regards one or more only of such questions;
- d) the holder of interests in the company holding the

licence exceeding in amount five per centum of the total of the amounts of all the interests in that company that would exist if Sections 91A and 91B of this Act had not been enacted; or

- e) the holder of shareholding interests in the company holding the licence exceeding in amount five per centum of the total of the amounts paid on all shares in that company.<sup>14</sup>

Section 91A refers to the tracing back of shareholding interests through a number of companies, while 91B refers to the tracing back of loan interests. It is due to the failure to apply this retroactively that, for instance, Australian Consolidated Press have interests in TCN Sydney, WIN Illawara, NBN Newcastle-Hunter River Area, ECN Manning River Area, CBN Central Tablelands Area, CWN Central Western Slopes Area, GTV Melbourne, BTQ Brisbane, DDQ Darling Downs Area, and SDQ Southern Downs Area. This is merely the information from the Twentythird Australian Broadcasting Control Board Report which does not trace shareholdings back very far. The amendments also allowed for implementation of the principle one share - one vote, so that the articles of association could not be manipulated to keep voting rights below the prescribed level, as had been done in the past.

In 1962 the Board received complaints from NBN Newcastle and WIN Wollongong which led to attempts to impose further conditions on the licensees of existing commercial television stations. Both stations, which operated in overlap areas of reception from the Sydney stations, had found difficulty in obtaining film from overseas sources. On investigation, it was discovered that the film distributors had had a choice of supplying either WIN and NBN or the Sydney stations. The Minister intended to impose new conditions which would have made this illegal, but the licensees of both ATN and TCN instituted proceedings in the High Court to obtain both a declaration that the proposed conditions were invalid and an injunction restraining the Postmaster-General from imposing them. The High Court decided that only one minor condition could be imposed. The Board Report for the year following this decision announced somewhat coyly that

"Following changes in the constitution of the companies

holding the licences for stations WIN and NBN, the difficulties regarding the procurement of programmes have been largely overcome."<sup>15</sup>

What was meant was that ATN and TCN had bought interests in their erst-while competitors and now had a financial incentive to cease hampering the operations of WIN and NBN.

In 1956 the Broadcasting and Television Act contained a Section (88) which required both the A.B.C. and commercial licensees to use the services of Australians as much as possible in both production and presentation of television programmes. There was no specific proportion of local to overseas talent specified although in radio 5% of the music broadcast had to be by Australian composers. At first a large quantity of the material televised was of Australian origin, but as it became obvious that audiences preferred imported programmes which were also cheaper, the local content declined markedly, particularly in prime viewing time.

In 1960, following a Report on this situation by the Board, the Minister informed the commercial stations that after three years of operation forty per cent of their programming should be distinctly Australian in content and character and that at least one hour a week of prime viewing time (7.30 to 9.30 p.m.) must likewise be Australian. In the Report for 1961-2, the Board gives a breakdown of the Australian programmes being televised in metropolitan centres as 43% light entertainment, 23% family and children's programmes, 11% news, 7% sport, 7% current affairs and 3% drama.<sup>16</sup> From January 20th 1964, the requirements increased to 45% Australian and 2 hours weekly in prime viewing time. However material of British Commonwealth origin could be credited as 50% Australian but not be counted for more than 10% of weekly transmission. From the eighteenth of January 1965, the overall amount required became 50%. However, this was far from absolute, for as well as the allowance for British Commonwealth programmes, wholly indigenous drama was credited at twice its duration, other Australian drama (for example, an Australian production of an English play) credited at one and a half times, and wholly Australian produced children's programmes would also be credited at twice their duration. As well as this the Board would

only be concerned with fortyeight weeks of the year as it accepted the fact that during the holiday season, stations' programming changed to what is termed in the United States, and usually derogatively so, 'summer stock'. The only other change to occur before 1971 was that the prime viewing time must have eighteen hours of Australian Programmes over a four week period; two of the eighteen hours had to be Australian drama.

In September 1971 new regulations came into effect, again changing primarily the prime viewing time requirements. These requirements applied to twentyeight day periods in which between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. (extended prime time) 45% of the programme transmission time had to be Australian and this would increase to 50% from 26 June 1972. During this prime time at least six hours had to be first release Australian drama and at least 4 hours had to be of programmes for children of school age not only of completely Australian production, but also according to the Standards established by the Board. The double accreditation for first release indigenous drama and for Australian produced children's programmes remained, as did the one and a half accreditation for other first release Australian drama, but the special provision for British Commonwealth productions was dropped. Although first release drama has been specially treated this will not really affect the tendency to many reruns of Australian dramatic productions to help a station qualify in Australian content. Frequently such second (and third and fourth) screenings are presented to an unaware public as fresh programmes by showing, for example, one old episode of Homicide after three new ones - incidentally helping station economics.

#### THE VINCENT REPORT

In December 1962, a Select Committee of the Senate was appointed to inquire into the encouragement of Australian productions for television. The Report, referred to as the Vincent Report after its Chairman, Senator V.S.Vincent, has in the main yet to be acted on. The Committee's investigation of commercial television began with a statement on the functions of a station, which declared that

"It has a national responsibility because of its mono-



-polistic and priveleged position; it has a statutory obligation to conform to the requirem ents of the Board; and it also has an obligation to its shareholders which necessitates the sale of its programmes at a profit."<sup>17</sup>

The national responsibility arises mainly from the very limited number of licences issued and involves raising the standard of public taste, but the Committee reported that far too many programmes had the reverse effect. The Report deplored the high incidence of crime drama noting that not only did drama have the most effect on the moral standards of the community, but that it comprised more than half the total transmission time of each Australian station and 85% of peak viewing time (almost 22% of the total drama televised at this time was crime drama). Thus it was all the more reprehensible that for June 1963 while 51.02% of the total transmission time of metropolitan commercial television stations was devoted to imported drama, only 0.90% was Australian drama. The ill effects of this situation include the loss of Australian actors, actresses and dramatists to overseas countries (where they help to make programmes that are eventually bought by Australian stations) and the use of so much overseas exchange for the purchase of foreign programmes. Reasons given for the situation's existence included the high cost of local production - actually a fallacious claim, for it is cheaper to produce a drama programme in Australia than in either the United States or Britain, but there the costs are offset by much better marketing conditions -, the comparatively low cost of programmes from overseas, the low quality of many Australian programmes - due largely to inexperience and the loss of the best actors and directors to other countries - and the low payment for local scripts.

Among the Committee's recommendations was one suggesting that the Minister have the power to fix quotas for Australian local dramatic programmes and that this be initially 9% of the total time devoted to Australian programmes and also that this be progressively increased. As a final figure to be aimed at with regard to quotas, the Committee decided that if 50% of the drama was locally produced,

this would be beneficial to Australian society and to the television industry while still allowing a considerable range of good overseas programmes. (At present the Australian content requirements mention an Australian drama percentage only by requiring six hours of Australian first release drama every twentyeight days, this amounts to one and a half hours a week and for metropolitan stations the average transmission time is 165 hours a week making the percentage required approximately 0.91%.) Central to the Committee's recommendations was the establishment of an Australian Television Council to advise the Minister, to direct the operation of a recommended loan-subsidy scheme for the film industry, to be responsible for planning and co-ordinating national research programmes and to award scholarships and other assistance to writers, actors, theatres and other people and institutions associated with the Australian film and television industry. Other recommendations included strengthening the power of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, public hearings for the renewal of a station licence, provision of a special channel for educational television and the establishment of a Standing Committee of the Senate on all aspects of television. The only recommendations that appear to be enforced (and that very recently) are the provision for special programmes for school age children and the recording for future transmission of plays being presented in one or more of the state capitals. The latter is evidenced by the recordings of The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui and The Man Who Shot the Albatross.

#### RATINGS

Because commercial stations rely on advertising to finance their operation, they need some concrete evidence to give advertisers to show that they are good advertising media and that they are better than their competitors. The evidence they present and on which they are able to base their advertising charges, is the rating. There are a number of agencies in Australia whose main concern is establishing ratings and doing surveys for various television organizations, so that they can have this definite, concrete evidence. It does as well help to allay the fear of the television executive that maybe no one is watching. With a newspaper or magazine, this same fear does not exist - if no one

is reading it, no one is buying it - but in both television and radio there is no such simple method of ascertaining the existence of an audience. Unless the sales manager of a station can convince the advertiser that the station has a substantial audience, and preferably can give further details about the age range and even at times the socio-economic structure of the audience for certain programmes, then the advertiser is going to be very reluctant to part with the money necessary for the station's solvency. Unfortunately much doubt has been thrown on the accuracy and even the viability of ratings, but this does not yet seem to have affected either the station executives or the advertisers. The latter even use the doubtful ratings to assess which medium or which station will give the best value for money by working out the cost per thousand viewers - a method which is becoming discredited even within the advertising world which still accepts the validity of the ratings concept.

The two main criticisms of the rating system concern the representative nature, or otherwise, of the sample and the fact that it is a quantitative measure of sets turned on, not necessarily of the number of viewers or of their other activities at the time. The two major audience research organisations in Australia are Anderson Analysis and McHair Surveys whose methods differ, while other smaller groups use even more differing methods or combinations thereof. As of 1967, McHair were using daily logs together with phone follow-ups. Charges of a failure to use a representative sample are based largely on the claim that non-telephone homes are excluded from the sample. McHair claim that the sample is adjusted to allow for this by, for example, giving logs to 45% of the D and E class homes in the total sample because 45% of all D and E class homes have telephones. One problem with the use of daily logs is that some people may fill them in only at the end of the week with many resultant errors but the phone follow-up checking the entries every second day does help to overcome this.

Anderson use a diary system without a phone follow-up because--- they believe that no matter how the telephone homes are weighted, they still fail to be representative of the whole population. They

however, are subject to all the charges that can be laid against the diary system.\* Many people will not accept a diary at all, others accept it but fail to keep it faithfully, and for some such complex form-filling will always be difficult and error laden. Other methods that may be used involve the use of an automatic meter fitted to the television set which records when a set is on and to which channel it is tuned, but not whether anyone is watching, interviews which ask viewers to recall the programme they watched the previous night (or week) and assume that they remember and answer correctly and finally a device termed the Dynascope which placed inside the set, unbeknownst to the owners or viewers, films the activities of the viewers when the set is turned on. While the latter reveals quite a deal about audience behaviour - much totally unrelated to television - it did not receive great or pleased public acceptance when its use first became known.

It is these ratings of questionable derivation which determine the type of programme the public is offered by commercial, and even to some extent national, television stations. If the ratings show that medical series are very popular, the public is offered more of them, or they are all shifted into peak viewing time; if crime series are rating well, the public suffers a plethora of crime drama. If current affairs programmes have a low rating they are dropped regardless of the fact that they may have more attentive viewers than some of the more highly rated programmes. At least there does not appear to be any evidence of a practice discovered in America of giving the highest rating to the station which is paying for the survey, but this does not mean that the station is not getting what it wants. Ratings are intended to reassure a station that it has viewers, that it is "giving the public what it wants", to enable it to purchase programmes of a type that should be successful and to provide bait to attract advertisers. Thus ratings are frequently expressed as percentages of the sets turned on and not of the total number of sets in existence. By this process the people who have voted against all programmes being broadcast at a particular time are ignored. All that the compilers and users of ratings are concerned with are the number of sets on, or the number of people sitting in

\* R. R. Walker: The Communicators, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1967.

front of them, regardless of whether they are reading, talking, playing cards or waiting for the next programme. This failure to account for all elements of the situation is common to most rating methods, as is the fact that people do not act naturally when they are being observed. The subject may wish to impress or mystify the interviewer, may not wish to admit to wasting a whole day watching television, or may feel that she/he should have watched the more popular programme, or the more challenging, and record in the diary or interviewer's notes programmes that were not being watched at all.

The assumption that people answer questionnaires or surveys truthfully, or keep to the course of action or pattern of behaviour they have outlined has been frequently disproved. As if the factors militating against reliance on ratings were not enough, the surveys all failed to take into account the non-compliers (no doubt there is little anyone can do about these people but they do distort the representativeness of the sample). Presumably if you do not wish to participate in a survey - because you are too busy, suspicious of strangers, disinterested or merely disobliging - you do not deserve to have your opinions considered in deciding "what the public wants". Unfortunately, the other side of this picture is that those who do participate may be overly obliging, gullible, housebound and fail equally to be representative of the general public.

Harry Skornia, in a book that surveys the failings of the American television system but is frequently applicable to the Australian situation, attacks the very principle of basing programming on "what the public wants". This public is really an audience which is composed of individuals whose wants are disparate and whose actions, such as programme selection, are based on impulse. Skornia's argument is also concerned with the gratification of wants and of needs. Failure to gratify the needs of people can be harmful, but the actual gratification of their wants may also be harmful.<sup>18</sup> People's needs are basic - for such things as survival, safety, security and self realization - but their wants may be created (this after all is the basis of the A.B.C's policy of improving standards of public taste).

If they have no choice but to watch football or turn the set off and they want diverting, they may in time develop a taste for football, but one could in the same manner create a taste for chamber music or butterfly collecting. Governments are well aware that "what the public wants" is lower taxes and cheaper goods, but because they believe that gratification of these wants might cause needs such as security of employment to be lost, they do not satisfy the public's wants. In the same way, gratification of public wants for crime, horror and war stories may damage public needs for safety, security and peace. Consequently even if ratings were reliable they would still not be the ideal index on which to base programme selection.

Why therefore do stations and advertisers continue to rely on ratings? To begin with, it is at the moment profitable to do so, for the ratings support the present system, although there is little opportunity for them to do otherwise as the choice can be made only from the available options. Secondly the ratings support the views of the station executives (though these views may be partly unconsciously moulded by the ratings and the shows they support, and partly reflected in the ratings) whose cynicism is frequently along the lines of the old marketing cliché "no one ever went broke underestimating the taste of the American [or Australian] public". Thirdly ratings can to some extent be manipulated to suit the wishes of the station executives. If a station has a show which is proving expensive or troublesome but has ratings which are too high to allow it to be dropped for the reason that it is failing to satisfy the public, the ratings of the programme can be lowered by shifting it into an unpopular time slot or placing it in direct competition with a very popular programme on an opposition channel or by changing its time slot from week to week so that the public becomes unsure of when, or even if, it is on. Once the ratings have dropped low enough, the programme can be removed because it is obviously no longer what the public wants and the television station, of course, aims to supply this want. Thus not only are ratings a means of control over the type of programmes the public sees but at times the shrewd executive can control them to control the

apparent wishes of the public.

#### THE FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIAN COMMERCIAL TELEVISION STATIONS

The ten capital city commercial television stations that existed in 1961, formed themselves, on the first of October, in to the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations (FACTS), this was to be a television trade association concerned with problems of common interest within the industry. It would not intervene in domestic matters affecting individual stations, although it would be instrumental in arranging the televising of special events of national or international importance, such as have eventuated with the various Royal or Papal visits or moonwalks. Its membership now comprises all Australian commercial television stations both metropolitan and provincial.

The only direct control it attempts to exercise is with regard to adherence to its voluntary code on cigarette advertising. This code was adopted following moves by various individuals and pressure groups to have cigarette advertising, particularly on television, stopped. The voluntary code appears to have been accepted by all stations and FACTS claim rather grandiosely that since the code's inception, Australian children have a lower rate of taking up smoking than children in New Zealand or the United States, in both of which countries cigarette advertising is banned, and also that while cigarette and tobacco consumption has increased in countries which ban television advertising of cigarettes, in Australia the actual consumption has decreased. The code specifies : that the aim of cigarette advertising is to effect a change of brand, not to encourage non-smokers to take up the habit (the code does not mention a main effect of cigarette advertising - increased consumption by the individual smoker),; that no character in a cigarette commercial shall be under 25 years of age; that no cigarette advertisements be shown between 4.30 and 7.30 p.m. on weekdays or before 7.30 p.m. on Sundays (the accepted hours of children's viewing); that no cigarette commercial involve testimonials from people of particular appeal to young people; that no advertising can claim special health properties for particular cigarettes or that any harmful ingredient is reduced unless such statements are backed by scientific auth-

ority; that although healthy, attractive models may be used in commercials, it must not be suggested that these attributes are to be derived from smoking; that well-known sportsmen shall not be used in cigarette advertisements, nor shall anyone who has just participated in strenuous physical activity; and finally that cigarette advertising must not show or imply habitual or excessive smoking.<sup>19</sup> The fear of losing the highly profitable cigarette advertising accounts, which is the motivating factor behind the code, is indirectly expressed in the tenth annual report of FACTS where it is said that

"Where discriminatory bans have been applied against the broadcast media of television and radio, or either of them, all competing media have reaped the benefit of diverted advertising monies"<sup>20</sup>

Apart from small campaigns for the removal of restrictions on political programmes at election times and on general programmes on Sunday mornings, the other main activity of FACTS appears to be with regard to the Australian content quotas. In this context it sees itself as the champion of the Australian public against what it terms the Australian Content Lobby. The members of this Lobby include the Screen Writers Guild, Actors Equity, the Producers and Writers Guild, the Film Council, the Musicians Union, the Film Editors Guild, the Television Technicians Association and presumably the T.V.-Make it Australian Committee. FACTS attacks the statements of this Lobby in both its annual report and in a submission to the Australian Broadcasting Control Board in September 1970 when the Board asked the Federation for its views on proposals to increase the quota. Repeatedly, it accuses the Lobby of selfishness in trying to obtain more jobs and money for its members, while declaring that the primary duty of a television station is to serve the public not the artists who work in the medium. The submission requested that commercials, all of which must be Australian, be counted in the Australia content times thereby giving, by the Federation's calculations, approximately 9 hours a week more of Australian content. It also wanted the peak viewing extended from 7.00 - 9.30 p.m. to 6.00 - 10.00 p.m.. This latter the Control Board agreed to but it considerably increased the amount of local content



required during this time. The main bases for FACTS opposition to increased quotas were summarised at the end of the submission when it pointed out

"the substantially high number of local programme hours — which compares more than favourably with the total content in overseas countries and to the correspondingly lengthy hours of entertainment programming which has resulted in considerable employment of production and creative personnel. The gap between revenue and production costs of local programmes aired in popular viewing times have [sic.] also been cited as reasons why the present balance between imported and local programmes should not be disturbed because it has made available to the public a variety of interesting programmes and at the same time has achieved the aims of the quota. The present indications of a substantial downturn in industry profits has also been commented on"<sup>21</sup>

The Control Board does not appear to have been unduly influenced by the Federation, nor for that matter by the Australian Content Lobby which was objecting to the inclusion of sport and news as Australian content and claiming that repeat screenings should not be entitled to any special loading. This latter did in fact come to be adopted; even drama repeats are only counted for their real time.

It is indeed doubtful that the Federation has any power apart from that of creating a certain uniformity among members. There are no sanctions which could be applied against members which violate the code on cigarette advertising, in fact it is possible that the only reason there have been no glaring violations of it is that the advertisements themselves are made for Australia-wide distribution and thus are made according to the wishes of the majority (i.e. according to the code). Would-be violators have to use the same commercials as the other stations, for economic reasons rather than loyalty to the Federation's wishes.

#### MEDIA OLIGOPOLIES

The media oligopoly situation, referred to earlier, needs closer examination because of the fears engendered in a considerable part of

of the thinking public by references to monopolies and news management. There are four main groups of Australian media owners and therefore the situation is oligopolistic not monopolistic. It is true, however, to speak of a tendency to monopoly for although rivalry exists between the four groups, they are only too ready to combine to protect their interests - witness the aforementioned discussions on the Brisbane and Adelaide television station licences. The four groups are: The Herald and Weekly Times Limited, John Fairfax Ltd., News Ltd, and Consolidated Press Holdings Ltd.. All fourteen state capital city newspapers plus the two Canberra papers and the one national paper belong to the first three of these groups and in addition they have interests, as defined by the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, in twenty-seven television stations and similarly defined interests in thirty-five metropolitan and country radio stations. Many suburban and country newspapers, and most of the big national magazines, belong to the groups ( the only major exception to the latter being the Readers' Digest and Time, both of which are American) and they also own record and publishing companies. Thus of the various mass media it appears that film is the only one not under the groups' influence and film is becoming less of a mass and more of a minority media.

To examine the situation more closely, it is valuable to look at the interests of the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd. which controls eight of the state capital city newspapers - in Melbourne The Herald and the Sun-News-Pictorial, in Brisbane The Courier Mail and The Telegraph, in Adelaide The Advertiser, in Perth The West Australian and The Daily News and in Hobart The Mercury - five television stations - HSV in Melbourne which is its major television interest but as well it has interests in BTQ Brisbane, ADS Adelaide, TVT Hobart and TVW Perth. In radio it holds the licences for both 3DB Melbourne and 3LK Lubeck and has interests in 3XY Melbourne, 4AK Oakley, 4BK Brisbane, 4AM Atherton, 4BH Brisbane, 5AD Adelaide, 5MU Murray Bridge, 5PI Crystal Brook, 5SE Mt. Gambier, 6LK Perth, 6BY Bridgeton, 6ND Merredin, 6WB Katanning, 7HD Hobart and 7EX Launceston. In the magazine field it publishes The Weekly Times, The Listener-in-TV, The Australian Post, The Sporting

Globe, The Australian Home Beautiful, and Aircraft. It also publishes various country newspapers as well as the Papua-New Guinea Post Courier.

There are three main reasons for the development of a few giant companies in the field, two of them economic. Firstly, it is costly in the extreme for expensive printing equipment to lie idle, therefore magazine and newspaper companies are gathered together in one large group. Secondly, the operation of radio in the dissemination of news demands staffs of journalists and editors also costly to maintain, but if an agreement can be obtained with a newspaper group to supply the news, this cost is reduced. Frequently such an arrangement results in, or is derived from, newspaper groups' interests in broadcasting companies. With television, as has been already noted, the initial requirements established by the Australian Broadcasting Control Board for a successful television licensee - financial stability and experience in the communication and entertainment field - all but eliminated any other than established newspaper publishers preferably with broadcasting interests, from the field.

The main objection to oligopolies in the mass media field is that they can limit the range of opinions expressed. This need not occur if the directors do not interfere in editorial concerns, but either the Australian directors have failed to remain uninvolved in editorial policies, or Australian editors have failed to believe the protestations of editorial neutrality. With only four companies the range of opinion must necessarily be limited if all indulge in editorial influence, but most exhibit remarkably similar beliefs. The actual influence exerted by the directors would certainly not be day-to-day in most cases (Clyde Packer's ex-managing directorship of TCN9 and GTV9 would possibly have been the closest) but would be exercised by the more subtle and effective means of appointing high level staff sympathetic to their views, making sure that their views are known, and sacking or failing to promote anyone who consistently opposes them. With a very limited number of employers of journalists (virtually only the four companies and the A.B.C. can afford any number of high calibre

people) most employees are very chary of upsetting anyone in control.

It is not only the views held by management and the directors that are important, however, but also the other interests of the company and other directorships held by members of the board are influential in deciding what the public reads about, hears or watches. If the company chairman is also on the board of a company involved in a big development which is despoiling the countryside, he is hardly likely to relish it if his television station shows a programme which decries this, or if his newspaper attacks the development. Frequently at times such programmes or articles must be used because the opposition channel or paper has broken, or will break, the story and their version is likely to accord even less with the view of the original company chairman. Such a story from a rival can also lead to self-justifying programmes on the company channel or radio station or stories in its newspaper or magazine or even in or on all of them. Similarly programmes, articles, even advertisements can be affected by interests of the company itself. It has been claimed that because the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd. has considerable interests in Stadiums Ltd., it is very difficult for any boxing promoter to operate in Melbourne. Because the boxing telecasts are on HSV (the company channel), independent boxers do not become known; because both the Herald and the Sun News Pictorial - presumably the papers more likely to be read by boxing fans - are company papers, publicity is difficult to obtain and advertisements if they can be placed are rarely, if ever, given prominence, and finally because Stadiums Ltd. control most of the rings, it is difficult even to obtain a ring as even the independent ring owners may not wish to run the risk of offending the media and being consigned to the outer darkness of media silence.<sup>22</sup>

With this in view, it is useful to look at the other directorships held by the directors of the four media groups. John Fairfax Ltd's Board hold directorships in only one company not associated with the media in some way (as for instance are Australian Newsprint Mills (Holdings) Ltd. and Australian Associated Press) and that is the chairmanship of the Australian Mutual Provident Society held by Vincent Fairfax. The Herald and Weekly Times Ltd. on the other hand have a wide assortment of

industries in which their directors hold directorships: Australian Dredging General Works Pty.Ltd., Freightbases Pty.Ltd., Fleetways (Holdings) Ltd., Rothmans of Pall Mall (Aust)Ltd., Airclaims (Aust)Ltd., Glen Iris Brick Holdings Ltd.(a subsidiary of Boral Ltd.), McKenzie and Holland (Aust) Pty.Ltd., Westinghouse Brake (Aust) Pty.Ltd., Atlas Steels Ltd.(a subsidiary of Rio Algon Mines Ltd.), Santon Ltd., Executor Trustee and Agency Co.of South Australia Ltd., Argo Investments Ltd. and Bounty Investments Ltd.. As well as this (which is not a complete list) the Deputy Chairman, Sir John Williams, is Chairman of the Commissioners of the Australian National Line.

In News Ltd., directorial interests include Adelaide and Wallaroo Fertilisers Ltd., Ansell Rubber Co.Pty.Ltd.,(a subsidiary of Dunlop (Aust) Ltd.), Australian Cotton Textiles Industries Ltd., Austral Steel, the Bank of Adelaide, The Commercial Assurance Co. of Australia Ltd., Elder Smith Goldsborough Mort, South Australia Brewing Co.Ltd., Lensworth Finance, Fairey A/Asia Ltd., various subsidiaries of Clyde Industries Ltd., Wellington Publishing Co.Ltd. and Fiesta Holidays. Together with these, Alwest Pty.Ltd., a subsidiary of News Ltd., holds extensive bauxite deposits in the Darling Ranges (W.A.) which are being explored and developed in partnership with B.H.P.. Finally Consolidated Press Holdings yields directorial interests in Bowling Centre (Holdings) Ltd., Vancred Industries Pty.Ltd., Industrial and Trade Fairs Pty.Ltd., and perhaps most interestingly Ajax Films Pty.Ltd., of which both Sir Frank and Clyde Packer are directors, which is a subsidiary of W.D.and H.O.Wills (Aust) Ltd..<sup>23</sup>

It is not suggested that information about these companies is systematically altered by reporters, editors and programmers. What is far more likely is that the editor will receive a phone call from a director or one of his subordinates, suggesting that there is a good story on such and such a company, and because of the close relationship of source and outlet, the story is likely to receive better play than it would have otherwise. On the other hand, if the story is not so favourable to the company, there may be a request to play it down or to emphasise points which show the company in the best possible light.

Any thoughts that there are Machiavellian figures perched atop the media groups determinedly manipulating all that we read and see and hear and thereby producing a populace of the mindless and credulous, are far too simplistic and credit the media barons with superhuman powers. Lord Beaverbrook may have been involved in the day-to-day running of his newspapers (although he could not get his policies adopted) and Sir Frank Packer may have been instrumental in the removal of John Gorton from office, but the sheer size and range of interests of the four Australian media groups make it virtually impossible for any one man to control their output in any but the most generalized way. The dictum may go out to all the company's media that 'we are not over friendly to John Gorton' or even simply 'get Gorton' but this is only one issue. No doubt each company has a number of projects, personalities, and beliefs that are dear to its heart and ones that it either dislikes or does not handle, but most of the news would not come within these categories. While some of these may be important and special attention to them reprehensible, others may be minor or quite understandable - we do not feature so-and-so because he has a habit of applying writs without much justification or of abusing the staff following any mention of him. This, however, is not meant to be comforting, for the media are so conducted that day-to-day intervention by the Board of Directors or its Chairman is unnecessary. The management group which controls each medium is appointed by the Board, or its appointees, as a suitable instrument of Board policy and its continuance in office depends on pleasing the Board.

As multi-media groups become less family concerns and more controlled by directors who are just large shareholders interested in their investments, so the concern by both management and Board with the content of the paper goes down and interest in its profit-making increases. (It is noticeable that most charges of manipulation of news by directors are laid against the Fairfax and Packer groups - still family concerns - while the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd, whose directors are neither as well known nor related, does not suffer the same number of attacks.) This means that anything will be sacrificed if it does not

make a profit; a newspaper's style may be changed completely, a too independent editor sacrificed if his views are causing advertisers concern, public service features dropped unless they demonstrably lead to larger audiences or are basic to audience loyalty, advertising supplements increased and gimmick promotions introduced.

FOOTNOTES

1. "Viewers swarmed to vantage points for TCN's first telecast", Broadcasting and Television, September 8, 1966. p.26.
2. Report of the Royal Commission on Television, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1954. p.103.
3. Eighth Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, Year ended 30 June 1956. p.42.
4. Seventh Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, Year ended 30 June 1955. pp 29-30
5. J.S.Blundell: Aspects of Australian Television, M.A.Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1968. p.9.
6. Tenth Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, Year ended 30 June 1958. p.24.
7. Ken Davidson: "Profit and Loss" in Mungo MacCallum (ed.): Ten Years of Television, Sun Books, Melbourne, 1968. p.13.
8. Thirteenth Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, Year ended 30 June 1961. p.34.
9. Fourteenth Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, Year 1961-1962. p.34.
10. Fifteenth Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, Year 1962-1963. p.44.
11. Davidson: op.cit., p.15.
12. Broadcasting and Television Act, 1956
13. Broadcasting and Television Act. 1960
14. Broadcasting and Television Act 1942-1969, Section 91 (2).
15. Sixteenth Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, Year 1963-64. p.38.
16. Fourteenth Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, Year 1961-1962. p.54.
17. Report from the Senate Committee on the Encouragement of Australian Productions for Television, Canberra 1963. p.7.
18. Harry Skornia: Television and Society, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1967. pp.121-122.



19. Eighteenth Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, Year 1965-1966, p 56.
20. Tenth Annual Report of the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations, 1970/71, p 24.
21. Facts of Australian Content in Television Programme Schedules, submitted to the Australian Broadcasting Control Board by FACTS. 17/9/70.
22. "Media and the Main Game", New Journalist, No.4, Sept-Oct.1972.p.12.  
and "The young Wren boxes on", The Review, Vol.2, No.7, Nov.20-26, 1971, p 188.
23. Information on directorships obtained during the early months of 1972 from:  
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Jobson's Year Book Public Companies of Australia and New Zealand, Jobson's Financial Services Pty.Ltd., 1971.  
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Moodies Australian Company Card Service.

SOUTHERN TASMANIAN CASE STUDY

The case study is concerned with the one Southern Tasmanian daily newspaper, The Mercury, the News and Current Affairs Departments of the A.B.C., the one commercial television station, TVT-6, and the two commercial radio stations 7HO and 7HT. The Mercury, TVT-6, and 7HO are all controlled by the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd., while 7HT is part of the Major Broadcasting Network. Different approaches have been used with the different media, not only because they seemed apt, but also because in some cases the managements were more co-operative than in others. The major difference is the attempt at a minor form of content analysis on The Mercury, possibly because of the permanence of the material used, and suitable because the internal control of the paper is similar to the well-known organization of most traditional newspapers. The studies of the other commercial media were based on interviews of varying lengths and of the A.B.C. on interviews and prolonged observation.

## SECTION 1 : THE MERCURY

The Mercury is Tasmania's largest selling newspaper with a daily circulation of approximately sixty thousand. This paper, generally regarded as conservative, has been owned by the Davies family for three generations, although recently 417,236 of the 866,000 ordinary shares in Davies Bros. were acquired by the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd.. A new editor has been in control since the beginning of 1971 and there appears to be grounds for belief that the paper has improved - in terms of the amount of overseas news used and prestige among its readers - although this may be the result of cumulative changes over a number of years. However, the new editor had worked for many years on the paper before becoming editor and it is reasonable to assume that he had absorbed the character and style of the paper into his own administration and reportorial style. He would, after all, not have been promoted had his performance been at variance with the mores of the paper.

As the internal organization structure of a newspaper follows a standard pattern, and little valuable information would be gained from discovering that The Mercury followed the traditional practices, it was decided to try to find out the selection criteria operating by examining a specific 'gatekeeper' on the paper. It was decided to study the keeper of the last gate before publication as this would reveal most about the paper's beliefs. On The Mercury, this is the News Editor who selects from the stories he is given which to use. It was also decided to be concerned only with cable news since in this way there would be a measureable input as well as a measureable output. Both overseas and foreign news come by cable but there is one factor which impairs the validity of the study; cables are preselected in Melbourne for despatch to Hobart. Normally gatekeepers operating earlier on in the cable news channel do not alter a study because their selections are not specific for a particular newspaper, but are meant for a variety of papers whose values may range widely. However, because cables for The Mercury are transmitted from Melbourne directly to Hobart, the cost of transmission is reduced by omitting news which is unlikely to be used. The people who make this selection in Melbourne are all people who have worked, and presumably wish to continue to work, on The Mercury. The unconscious adherence to

a newspaper's style also applies to them, unless they can choose with a high degree of certainty the type of material likely to be printed, there would be no point in employing them. A visit to the cable transmission office and discussion with Hobart Mercury staff revealed that no most of the news omitted is interstate news of interest primarily in the state of origin.

At the beginning of the study, the News Editor explained his function as he saw it, his views on what the paper should present and his concept of the reader. The selection criteria to which he admitted seemed to show an educative bias; he believed historical background should be given whenever possible because the populace, and especially the young, were insufficiently informed on historical matters. With regard to crime reporting, he saw it as an essential part of the process of law that people should know that individuals had been charged with crimes and what their penalties had been. Crime reporting was also seen as instrumental in the maintenance of public supervision of the activities of magistrates and other figures of power within the law. The public could judge from reports of penalties and their consistency whether the law was being impartially applied and publicity would tend to keep legal men incorruptible. This does not mean that all crimes would be reported, for one thing this would mean a large amount of the paper would be filled with tedious reports of petty criminals, the crimes that were reported would be intended to point morals, to show what happened to a wrongdoer. Crimes would not be reported merely for sensationalism. The News Editor obviously was a very strong adherent to the belief that the mass media perform a community service and are not just designed to make a profit. He did not however mention the role of the mass media in maintaining the democratic process by informing the electorate of the activities of its representatives.

To discover further ideas held by the News Editor about his readers, he was asked to explain why during the two weeks of the study, less than a third of the material received on Vietnam and just over a half on the Middle East conflict only were used despite the importance of these two events. Although the latter amount is not too unusual, the News Editor himself pointed out that much Middle East news received

was being omitted, because he believed that so much of it being concerned with talking - of peace settlements, of alignments of future action and the possible moves of opposing sides - it had failed to remain of importance to the readers who presumably preferred action or results. This is surely indicative of a view of the readers as easily bored, demanding the continued presentation of nine-day wonders (or Seven-Day-Wars) rather than sustained information about a prolonged and complex situation. With regard to the Vietnam war, the News Editor said that much of the news was very run-of-the-mill and furthermore much of the material received is not concerned with the activities of Australians involved in the war. This reinforces the previous statement that the readers demand the novel and exciting and also presents them as rather parochial in their interests. A third reason given for the small amount of news on Vietnam was that people were becoming bored with it and would rather not find their papers full of it. The overwhelming impression one received of the paper's readers was that they had a very short attention span. The Editor himself admitted that his major concept of the reading public was of a large number of lazy people. It is not suggested that there is anything unusual or even necessarily erroneous about these views, but they do influence the way the news is selected and presented. Indeed the success of a paper working on these concepts, and most Australian papers seem to, would appear to back the general validity of the belief.

The study covered two weeks, from Monday 10th May 1971 to Saturday 22nd May 1971. It involved collecting from the News Editor the cables he had not used in the day's paper and comparing them with overseas and interstate news that was used. It was possible to compare the space that would have been occupied by unused material with that occupied in the paper because four lines of cable copy equal one column inch. In measuring the amount of space occupied in the paper, the headline was included not only because this was space devoted to the news item but also because it would in part compensate for sections of the original cable cut from the printed story. Photographs were not included in a measurement of column space occupied by a particular story as they were subject to criteria altogether different from the news itself, such

as whether the picture was an interesting one visually, whether there were any other graphics on that page and whether a picture was even available. Space occupied by photographs was used, however, in computation of the percentage of the newshole - that part of the paper available for news - used for overseas or interstate news. In computing the newshole, space occupied by sport, the editorial page (consisting of editorials, letters to the editor and occasional features), the crossword, radio and television guides, weather and shipping information, financial and social news and space allocated for particular regular departments such as those designed for women, farmers and anglers was omitted as was all space used by advertisement, including classified ones. All these spaces were unavailable for news and so could not form part of the newshole.

It was found necessary to omit Monday from many of the calculations because it was so different from the rest of the week. To begin with, the news editor was replaced by an assistant thus creating a difficulty in the study of the operation of one particular gatekeeper. Far more importantly, the volume of news received was much less than for other days of the week - news sources as well as the rest of the populace have their day of rest. This results in a small paper and the publication of all manner of trivia that would be discarded had it arrived later in the week. The first Monday, 10th May 1971, was particularly striking. In all, fourteen stories from overseas and interstate were discarded (on the Thursday of that week eighty-one such stories were discarded) and six of these were about the economic crisis surrounding the future of the German mark. 47.2 column inches were used on this crisis and the same amount discarded. The percentage of the newshole devoted to overseas news on this day was 36% - the highest of any day. This compared with an average for the week of 23.4% devoted to overseas news. The interstate percentage for Monday the 10th was 18%, not the highest for the week and comparing with an average for the week of 15.7%. Thus it appears that when Tasmanian news is scarce, the paper is filled not with interstate news but with overseas news. There are two possible explanations of this. Firstly that the overseas news is more interesting to Tasmanians than the interstate, or secondly, that

the paucity in Tasmanian news coincides with a paucity in interstate news. The latter is more likely, particularly when the nature of the stories used and unused for the day is examined: eleven unused overseas stories, three unused from interstate, twenty-six overseas stories used and seventeen from interstate. That is, nearly twice as many stories were received from overseas as from interstate.

The stories were assigned to categories some of which were revised as the study progressed. This does not mean that the paper itself regarded news as belonging to specific categories and deliberately treated them differently, although it was mentioned that they tended to print as many easily comprehensible scientific stories as they could, presumably as part of the educative wish, but it was hoped to discover whether news in different fields did, possibly unconsciously, receive different treatment. The final categories were: political, accident and disaster, human interest, economic (which included most agricultural stories as well, as too few eventuated to make the proposed category worthwhile and most of them were concerned with the economic concerns of agricultural producers and their products), scientific, crime, sex (these stories were generally sex crimes but were counted separately as it was believed, and rightly so, that the paper was unlikely to print very much at all in this category), religion and education as one category and finally trade union matters.

A difficulty in evaluating the results arose because the largest amount of material discarded was in the political category, but it was also this category that produced the largest amount of material that was used. Hence on Wednesday, 19th May, for example, only about two-fifths of the overseas political material received was used yet this was almost twice as much as that used from the next highest category. One way of discovering if material is used strictly in accordance with the amount received is to work out some rank order correlations by the Spearman test. If the category which has the largest amount unused is also the category which has the largest amount used and so on down to the smallest amount unused being from the same category as the smallest amount used, then the Spearman rank order correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ) will be one. If there is no correlation at all,  $\rho$  will be 0. Taking

two days at random,  $\rho$  for overseas news was 0.80 and 0.81 and for interstate news,  $\rho$  was 0.50 and 0.54. This shows that for overseas news the amount used does depend to a large extent on the amount received. For interstate news this is nowhere near as likely. Of course, this is quite a reasonable correlation and indeed it would be difficult to imagine it otherwise. If one received a total of 120 column inches of political news and only eight column inches of scientific news it would be highly unlikely that one would use anywhere near the same amount of each. It is in view of this that a result of 0.50 or 0.54 is very interesting for it means that some categories must be using an amount disproportionate to the amount received.

The two most obvious categories to account for this are the crime and sex categories. This is not at all unexpected. The News Editor had explained the reasons why and had said that if people wanted "that sort of thing" they could get it elsewhere. During the two weeks of the study, there were two big crime stories from interstate. One was the hearing of a youth charged with the murder of a woman in a hotel room. Much of the material on this case was concerned with the sexual nature of the crime. At the end of the first week, the only story published by The Mercury on this was a very low key report of the findings. In all 25.0 column inches on this were discarded and 11.9 used. The second story lasted both weeks and concerned a man charged with drowning his wife and children. At the beginning of the first week 25.5 column inches were used but the story was not mentioned again during the two weeks of the study. In all 50.5 column inches on the story were discarded. Over the two weeks only 40% of the material received from interstate on crime was published.

Another instance of a category in which an amount disproportionate to the amount received was used, is the accident and disaster category. Here, however, the situation is reversed and a large amount of the material used. 74% of the material on foreign disasters and accidents was used as was 60% of the material from interstate. This is a basic news value seemingly irrespective of the newspaper involved; disasters and accidents creates 'good' news stories. The categories 'accident and disaster', 'crime and sex', while accounting largely for the anomalies



between the amount received and the amount used, do not unfortunately reveal very much that could not be gathered from other sources, so one is forced to attempt to discover if other particular concerns exist by different methods.

It was decided that the area most likely to reveal special interests and peculiarities, if they existed, would be the political one and this would be even more relevant in the light of the role played by a newspaper in the democratic process. One day on which an especially large amount of political material from interstate was discarded, was examined in detail to see if a general trend could be discovered to look for in the whole period studied. On Thursday, 13th May, fourteen cables totalling 101.5 column inches of political news from interstate were rejected while only four were used. These latter, however, totalled 80.4 column inches but this largely explained by one story of 46.2 column inches on an attack by a Tasmanian Senator on a Tasmanian trustee. The other three political stories were on: Government plans to improve relations with China (16.2 column inches), a protest by the United States over Australian sales to Cuba (14.5 column inches) and 3.5 column inches on a visit by Dr. Spock to Australia in conjunction with Vietnam Moratorium rallies. The unused stories concerned parliamentary activities and a few minor demonstrations, complaints and objections about Government policy. With the exception of the major story used, which was featured no doubt because of its local content, the outstanding aspect of the material used is that it concerns Australia's relations with the outside world, with China, the United States, Cuba and Vietnam, whereas the rejected material is concerned with internal politics. On examining the whole two week period, it is discovered that of the Australian political news published, 40.7% concerns Australia's relations with foreign countries. If this is normal it certainly dispels the popular belief that Australians are not interested in foreign affairs, assuming that the paper is giving its readers what they want. Alternatively it could be due to Tasmania's feeling of geographic isolation from the rest of the continent, that the activities of the various political bodies on the mainland seem little more relevant for the bulk of Tasmanians than their activities with regard to

the rest of the world.

It thus appears that the average reader of The Mercury in his role as a member of a democracy is more likely to have access to information regarding the performance of the government if it <sup>is</sup> of direct concern to Tasmania and only Tasmania, or if it concerns Australia's relations with the rest of the world. The former case includes the coverage of local state government activities, so the Tasmanian elector can check on some of the activities of his local member, but is less likely to be able to be informed on the practices of the Government as a whole or the other parliamentarians.

Except for foreign affairs news and the higher use of scientific stories previously mentioned, the attempt at content analysis revealed little of much interest but it did support most of the News Editor's claims. Unless it was an unusual week, his belief that about two-thirds of the cables received are rejected did prove unfounded - only very slightly more than half were unused. On a weekly average approximately 61% of the newshole contained Tasmanian news, 16% interstate news, and 23% overseas. This is particularly interesting in the light of popular belief that foreign news is particularly poorly treated by The Mercury. It does, however, relate to the views on foreign affairs news given earlier.

Interviews with the editor revealed little about his conception of his readers, except that they were lazy, but much about his conception of his paper. He was inordinately proud of it and held views similar to, but more aggressively expressed than, those of his News Editor, on the community service function of The Mercury. He refused to print a story about a bomb hoax because he thought it would cause more, he is very pleased with a regular section giving the background to current news stories and he believes that although individual members of the medical and legal professions should be given no special privileges, the public must never be caused to lack faith in the professions themselves. When questioned about proprietorial and directorial control he said he rarely had contact with them. The only occasion he could remember, or would cite, was when he had dropped the golf scores from the sports section and the proprietor, a keen golfer, had written

querying this. The Editor replied saying that all clubs had been notified that this would happen and the golf scores remained out. This interview took place just before a change in the Board required that one member be from the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd..

In 1969, the paper conducted a survey of its readers to discover their interests and attitudes. 72.2% of the sample believed that The Mercury reflected the interests of Tasmanians. About 80% claimed to rely on the paper for Hobart, Tasmanian, interstate and world news. In general comments, the allegedly small amount of world news in The Mercury was mentioned quite often, supporting the claim that this was a popular belief. The rest of the survey is not of use for the study as it allowed too many multiple answers which clouded useful information.

In general then, the internal controls over the material used in the paper ensure that it remains a conservative, family medium, conducting community service campaigns against litter and for road safety and supporting newsworthy charitable campaigns. There does not appear to be over much friction between advertising and news sections, perhaps because with no competition, the advertising men do not have to seek so aggressively after news and offer free news-space in return.

## SECTION 2

### The Australian Broadcasting Commission

The study of the A.B.C. in Hobart concentrated entirely on two sections, News and Current Affairs, because it was felt that these two, being the most sensitive, would reveal most about the controls imposed on the A.B.C.. The News department in Hobart differs from the mainland practice in catering for both radio and television. Current affairs programmes originated in the state are limited to the one week-night television programme - Line-up - apart from the small interview segments used in such national programmes as AM, PM and Notes on the News.

The organization of the Hobart News Office has at its head the News Editor and under him the Chief-of-Staff and Assistant Chief-of-Staff. There are nineteen journalists, five of whom sub-edit, six cameramen, one sound recordist and an assistant cameraman. Two of the subs are for radio - one for the morning and midday bulletins the other for the afternoon and evening. Three subs are needed for the television news, one as chief-sub, usually the Assistant Chief-of-Staff. The Chief-of-Staff controls the assignment of duties in the same manner as any news room Chief-of-Staff, but his Assistant handles the special requirements of television - the cameramen, the film, all the extras necessitated by a visual as well as an aural medium. It is not expected that the Chief-of-Staff will refer many matters to the News Editor but that he will be able to deal with most problems of treatment and approach himself. The News Editor receives copies of all stories and consults with the sub-editors on their treatment and expectations for the next bulletin but is himself consulted on treatment usually only if the material is felt to be open to possible legal action or is otherwise controversial or sensitive. The News Editor's role is primarily administrative and concerned with the training of cadets.

The main control over the news is by the Chief-of-Staff. He decides what stories to follow up or seek, where to send which reporters and, to some extent, which of their stories to use. The extent to which the news bulletins are his creation is an interesting problem. If a politician or business man or any prominent person promises to do some-

-thing or hints at forthcoming events or in any way refers to projected action, a note is made in a file for some time when it may be assumed that the event is near or that further developments will have occurred. When this date is reached, the Chief-of-Staff sends a reporter to follow up the earlier lead. It is the duty of every journalist who hears of something useful for this file to ensure that some note of it is made for future reference. In drawing up his list of assignments for a particular day, the Chief-of-Staff uses this information but often it is more as a lead or opening question for the reporter who may hope to get a news story on some other topic from his source of information. The Chief-of-Staff also uses newspapers, bulletins from other stations or channels, announcements, invitations, even gossip overheard on the way to work as sources for assignments. Thus although the reporters are expected to be ever alert for a possible story, the Chief-of-Staff in his choice both of assignments and of reporters to cover them, is the initial source of internal control in the production of the news bulletins. As he is also an important figure in the training of cadets, his concept of news values and his view of his audience is doubly important for it moulds not only his selection of the news, but its selection by the reporters themselves.

The Chief-of-Staff in the Hobart A.B.C. newsroom, as with most other experienced journalists, finds it very difficult to define what he classifies as news. He claims to recognize it almost instinctively but when he tries to explain its elements falters, and finally says much the same as the definition of the aims of the A.B.C. News Service quoted previously. His statement is not as comprehensive and he is no doubt unaware that it mirrors the official one, but he does demonstrate the ubiquity of its influence. This, however, does not really indicate any way of recognizing what is and what is not news.

The Chief-of-Staff does not see the A.B.C. News Service in competition with commercial stations but admits that others in the A.B.C. may not share his viewpoint. He believes that the audience for the news he provides is composed of more serious people and he intends to cater for them, yet he does not see the A.B.C. News Service being influenced in a

day-to-day manner by the demands of its audience. This he believes is what happens to commercial stations who have to satisfy their audience or they will lose their advertisers and their income. The commercial channels therefore have to be concerned, as the A.B.C. News Service does not, with what is being shown on the other channels and are thereby competing with the A.B.C..

His description of the viewers of the commercial channel's news service helps define his idea of his own audience. The commercial news viewers are less responsible, want entertaining more than informing, are less serious and less educated. One therefore assumes that A.B.C. viewers are responsible, serious, educated people who are demanding more information. The Chief-of-Staff is thus looking for news which will inform, news which is not sensational merely for sensation's sake - he pointed out the dilemma this could cause when he had to judge between the need to inform the public, particularly parents, about the activities of child molesters, while realizing that this was sensational material and far too often used by other media for reasons other than the highly moral one of the A.B.C. - and news which will help the public function as informed members of a democratic system.

The Assistant Chief-of-Staff, being concerned with the production of a visual service has other considerations to meet. The public can be informed in much greater depth by the use of film of various events, but the process of editing (which is overseen by the Assistant Chief-of-Staff) to make the film visually attractive can lead to certain distortions of the truth. The shooting ratio - the amount of film shot:amount of film used - is generally about 5:2, that is if one hundred feet of film is shot then only forty feet of it will be used. The forty feet selected will be of those shots which best illustrate the points made and those which are the most interesting. The problems that this can cause are heightened by the fact that people believe television news to a much greater extent than they believe news they cull from other sources. On television one can see what happened. Thus a film of a demonstration may show a group being harangued and some scuffles or arrests, because although these are not all that happened, they are the

highlights of the event, but in showing this view of the happening to the television audience, the broadcasters are in danger of overlooking the broader view of the demonstration which may have been largely a quiet exhibition of people's beliefs. Similarly in showing a film of a football match, though shots used will be of goals being scored and other exciting moments, but the game may have been a rather dull spectacle for those who saw all of it. The need to balance a true depiction of an event against interesting moments (for very rarely can more than a few minutes be shown) is one that must be of prime concern to the Assistant Chief-of-Staff. Generally the need for visual content takes primacy, for the presentation of a highly accurate outline of events balanced with the proportion of inaction to action that occurred in the original, matters little if no one watches because it is boring. Again, as with the Chief-of-Staff, his Assistant assumes that his audience is sufficiently intelligent to realize that they are only seeing highlights. Whether this assessment of his viewers is accurate is another matter.

The role of the Assistant Chief-of-Staff in the control of the news bulletins is more important, however, in that he acts as chief sub-editor for the television bulletin. In this role he selects from the stories that have come in those that he will use and the order in which he will use them. He also chooses the graphics - maps, pictures of people, places and objects - to illustrate such stories as are without film. He decides not only how to edit the film but also whether to use it at all. Approximately twenty percent of the films received are not used at all, but much of this is due to their being shot by inexperienced, even amateur, cameramen for the A.B.C. uses a considerable number of stringers (country correspondents who contribute material when anything of note occurs in their district). As both the News Editor and the Chief-of-Staff usually leave between five and six and the first television news bulletin does not go on the air until seven, the Assistant Chief-of-Staff's control over the news that is actually broadcast is considerable. The sub-editor working on the radio news is independent of the television sub-editors but they sit at the same table and discuss their treatment and selection of the available

material. The radio sub-editor has more bulletins to prepare but is not concerned with international or interstate news as all this is broadcast nationally from Sydney. He has only to prepare the Tasmanian news for the main bulletins and some of the news-in-brief bulletins. The sub-editors are the ultimate gatekeepers having the final say over what is used but they can only select from the material they receive.

One difference between the radio and television sub-editors is that the television one has to search for material to link films. He seems generally more concerned with the production of a continuous bulletin, being pleased when a story on Cambodia arrived for it allowed a film on Vietnam to be followed by the statement "meanwhile across the border in Cambodia..." . Many problems arise with the films of overseas events, problems which the chief television sub-editor must solve. The films come from two syndicated sources - CBS and Visnews. Both these are heavily American oriented and little British or European film arrives by comparison. Sometimes film is used simply because it has an element of rarity, such as films from Communist China prior to its recent opening up. Unfortunately overseas films are usually at least two days old when received and thus the original reason for showing them may have passed, but unless the situation has changed too greatly, the film will be used but reference to the time of the event being shown will be carefully omitted. The need for a considerable amount of film in a television news bulletin - after all as a visual medium it needs more visual content than the head and shoulders of the news reader, or even his head, shoulders, hands and desk - may cause events of low news value to be classified as news and events whose topicality is passed or whose lifespan as news is almost exhausted, to be revived, refurbished and passed off as brand spanking new 'news'.

#### LINE - UP

The current affairs programme examined was Line-Up \*, a half-hour

\* This programme was studied in 1971; at the beginning of 1972 it changed its name to TDT.



programme following the 7.00 p.m. news each week day. The programme, which was for a year the Australian pilot for the type now seen in the mainland programmes of This Day Tonight (TDT), is now in its sixth year and has changed its style greatly since its inception, becoming more sophisticated both technically and in content to deal with an audience who have become more critical, less easily satisfied, but who differ markedly from the audience for, for example, the Sydney-Melbourne TDT. It is perhaps wise to examine this difference as seen by the Executive Producer, before examining the production of the programme itself, for the programme is designed to cater for the needs of the audience as seen by the production staff.

The main cause of the difference arises from the existence in both Sydney and Melbourne of four television channels, three commercial and one A.B.C.. Thus the public has a four-way choice, while in Hobart there is only one commercial channel and the public therefore only have a choice of two. Because of the range of opinions available, the viewers of TDT tend to be, to quote the Executive Producer, "hard-core A.B.C. documentary viewers" and thus the producers of TDT do not have to be as concerned with variety and entertainment as do the producers of Line-Up. The former can concern themselves with more complex issues and delve into them more deeply (they also have a larger budget and more staff) than can the latter who can only occasionally depart from the number of smaller items with high local content demanded by their more heterogeneous audience.

The most basic control is shown graphically on the Executive Producer's wall. The amount of local content must not be allowed to fall below sixty-five percent for any period of time or there are likely to be complaints from viewers. A graph depicting local content hangs in a significant place where it can be seen at each morning conference. When it falls significantly below the sixty-five percent line, it is usually because some feature from interstate or overseas has been used and these are written in on the chart.

A study done by the A.B.C. research branch in late 1970 on public response to Line-Up programmes was used to back up the Executive Producer's beliefs in his audience's tastes. The study showed for each

segment of each night's programme, the percentage of the research sample that found the segment interesting, boring or average. Local items scored significantly higher than most other items and light entertainment was significantly scored as more boring (this was realized long before the survey). Frequent use of light entertainment was continued however for two reasons: it gave variety to a programme breaking up the more serious segments and also if used following a serious segment, gave people time to discuss the previous item without feeling that they were missing something of equal importance. The greatest interest during the test period was shown in a live broadcast from the Westgate Bridge disaster but an intriguing factor of this was that the interest carried over onto the following item - totally unrelated and not normally such that it would create the wide interest that it apparently did. Apart from the disaster, which can hardly be regarded as anything but exceptional, the greatest interest was shown in local human interest stories, while the most boring items were also local but concerned economic matters and fluoridation .

The Line-Up team consists of an Executive Producer, an Associate Producer, a compere, three reporters, one research assistant and a script assistant, while working with the team are two Producers from the Programme Department who although they must produce other programmes (the channel has only three producers) regard themselves, and are regarded by the others, as part of the team. Line-Up is not under the control of the Programme Department, but directly under the control of the Assistant Manager. The working atmosphere is casual and there is considerable team spirit, but although any member of the team can, and frequently does, take decisions, finally control rests securely with the Executive Producer, unless the matter is technical.

At approximately 9.30 a.m. the team meet in the Executive Producer's office to discuss the day's programme. All are expected to contribute ideas of items worth investigating and a large number of these suggestions seem to be derived from other media, especially newspapers. Sometimes, however, suggestions are knocked back because they have had all the exposure they can take by other media. (This causes one to contemplate the almost incestuous nature of the relationship among the media;

newspaper sub-editors working while listening to A.B.C. news bulletins, the prominent place of the television set in the newspaper editor's office, the almost obsessive reading of newspapers by all working within the media, the examination of rival's material within each media for stories which may be overlooked or stories which have been over-played already.) The suggestions are discussed, avenues of exploiting them mentioned and sought and likely obstacles examined. Technical problems take primacy as all is dependent on the availability and skill of the technicians. Thus the illness of a cameraman may completely <sup>block</sup> a story. Throughout the examination of the A.B.C., the importance of technical controls was apparent. This is to be expected, particularly with television, for the more technically complex an operation, the more easily it can be upset. Only one person in a particular area may possess one certain skill and thus anything that stops or inhibits his operation will stop or inhibit the whole programme.

By the end of this meeting some definite lines to work on have been suggested and these may not necessarily be merely for the particular day's programme. Due to the small staff, work must be planned well in advance and some suggestions mooted during the morning conference concerned a trip to be made by one reporter gathering stories along the East Coast in three week's time. The final decisions are enunciated by the Executive Producer who allocates people - if they have not already indicated that they are or will be doing something on a particular topic - to the various items. The reporters then begin contacting people or discussing further how to treat various topics.

At 10.30 a.m. the team, except for the reporters already engaged on work, view the previous night's edition of the Sydney-Melbourne TDT to see if any of that material would be of use for Line-Up. Much is of course not of use as it may concern local Sydney, Melbourne or Canberra matters or may now be out of date. Frequently excerpts are used or kept for possible later use, for they cover material unavailable to local teams and use of TDT material helps to cut the cost of Line-Up for current affairs programmes are very expensive to run. This is advanced as one reason for the abdication of commercial television from the

current affairs field - it costs more than the ordinary entertainment programmes and does not draw greater audiences. The Executive Producer noted however that the commercial channels in Tasmania put their most popular programmes such as Homicide and Division 4 at the same time as Line-Up, though whether this is because 7.30 p.m. is the prime viewing time or because Line-Up has greater power in attracting audiences would be hard to say.

Having chosen the parts of TNT to be used the team becomes occupied with arranging and conducting interviews, discussing problems among themselves, editing material already taped (each reporter oversees the editing of the interviews he has conducted or the stories he has helped film ) choosing the furniture to be used for studio interviews - important for establishing an atmosphere - and conducting the many administrative, research or production tasks necessary for the creation of the programme.

If a reporter believes he has some controversial or problematic topic, the methods of dealing with it, for the A.B.C. is particularly vulnerable and therefore sensitive to public criticism, depend on just how controversial it is seen to be. According to this it will progress along a regular path designed to forestall public criticism or at least to prepare the A.B.C. to meet it. Firstly the reporter discusses the problem with his peers, if this fails to resolve it, the whole team will be involved. This process usually solves the problems - maybe an important political figure is to be interviewed and the reporter wants to ensure that no possibly fruitful area of questioning is overlooked - but if the Executive Producer feels that the matter is controversial and likely to invoke a possibly hostile public response, he will take the matter higher. Whether the matter is taken to the manager or to the Assistant Manager depends purely on the time of the year; for six months the Manager deals with these problems and for the following six months the Assistant Manager does. Presumably this is for training purposes, but may also be to stop the decision-making process becoming automatic, conservative and unimaginative. In almost all cases the Assistant Manager or Manager will take the decision on whether to

screen the item or not, but in the rare cases where the item concerns a controversial problem of Federal import, or if the material comes from interstate<sup>where</sup>, there may be a writ on it, then the matter is referred to the Head Office in Sydney for a decision. If the problem is a legal one the Deputy Crown Solicitor is contacted for advice on the legality of the matter. There does exist a Legal Department in the Sydney offices but this is not used by other states for day-to-day consultation. The Assistant Manager commented on the relationship between the A.D.C. and the Deputy Crown Solicitor remarking how useful it was to have a senior government official so ready to cooperate.

The important point to notice here in the handling of controversial matter is that the initiative for checking and even the opportunity for control was to come from below, the reporter asks for help, the Executive Producer sees the Assistant Manager or Manager. The only chance the Assistant Manager or Manager has to exercise control over individual programmes comes through a brief written outline of the day's programme given to him by the Executive Producer. This outline, however, is not given to him until at least 4.30 p.m. It is unlikely that this would give much indication of possible areas of controversy, but the Assistant Manager emphasized that the Executive Producer was "very good on these matters" - meaning that he was consulted whenever there was any doubt about an item. The procedure when a complaint was registered followed that of any good organization, each person defended his subordinates to either the complainant from without the organization or to his superior but depending on the severity of the offence and the justification of the complaint, reprimanded the offender. Usually the matter would have been dealt with prior to the night's programme and thus reprimands would not be necessary but occasionally something would occur - a question in an interview, some unfortunate editing, a compere's remark, even the remarks of the person being interviewed - that had slipped through the screening process. In these cases the severity of the reprimand would vary with the severity of the offence, usually only a verbal reprimand is used, although many sanctions including dismissal are available.

During the late morning and early afternoon, problems arise which

cause the changing of the planned programme. A blackboard in the Line-Up offices has chalked on its right side the proposed programme but by the end of the afternoon the actual programme chalked on the left side may bear little resemblance to it at all. Reasons for the changes are varied but usually appear to be technical: a film cannot be edited in time, another film being sent from England was sent to Sydney instead of Hobart, a person who was to be interviewed has too tight a schedule to fit in an interview. In some cases the material excluded from a proposed programme may leave the programme with too many non-Tasmanian items and some of these will have to be replaced to satisfy the viewers' wishes for high Tasmanian content. In other cases, some news of great importance may break during the afternoon and an item has to be devised about it. Thus, for instance, the announcement by President Nixon that he would visit China necessitated finding someone to comment on it, research to ensure that the background of the move was known to the interviewer and setting up the studio interview, none of which could be prepared before knowledge of the content of Nixon's announcement was known just after mid-day. In this case the announcement was in the 12.30 p.m. news and the interviewee was contacted at 12.35 p.m. when a time for the interview was arranged. At 5.00 p.m. the interview was taped without rehearsal although some areas of discussion were outlined, as much, one gathers, for the benefit of the interviewer as the interviewee because the area of discussion, Chinese and American foreign policies and Australia's involvement in them, was a highly specialized one. The interview was not edited nor did it need to be reshot. At times interviews are retaped when there has been some technical fault, or either the interviewer or the interviewee has failed to appear in a reasonable or typical light, or when some question felt to be essential for the interview has not been posed or not answered.

Taping of interviews and a general run through of the programme occurs between 4.30 p.m. and 6.00 p.m.. At this stage a detailed run-down of the programme is distributed to all involved - each segment is detailed and timed, the closing comments on films mentioned so that no one is surprised by sudden endings and a standby tape is detailed in case it is needed. Because the studio has only two videotape machines, the

outline has to be strict and each tape has to be ready to run in its place on the programme. The stand by or "wild" tape is on the other machine should any problem occur. A copy of the programme outline is sent to the Assistant Manager and this is the first time he knows what is included in that night's programme unless the Executive Producer has needed to consult him over some problem. The newsroom, however, receives not only the 4.30 p.m. programme outline, but also the earlier morning projected outline. The Assistant Manager pointed out that the freedom allowed the Line-Up team was a matter of management policy, shared shared by both Manager and Assistant, that the best performance was gained by giving each person as much responsibility as possible.

Unless a very important news event occurs after 4.30 p.m., and an item can be devised in time for use that night, the only changes after this point are technical. The programme is finally screened - with most of the compere's comments live - at 7.30 p.m.

Only very rarely is there any reviewing of a previous day's work. This is because the material should be topical and also because it will have been viewed frequently in the process from recording to screening. The reporter must oversee the editing, he may, and frequently does, see the tape from the afternoon's session, which may not need to be edited, after it is shot. Occasionally an interview or a transcript of one is examined in detail for points of interviewing technique, but generally training is received on the job. Now there are specialist current affairs trainees recruited direct from university and trained in Sydney but none of the Line-Up team had this background, the compere had been a teacher, one of the reporters had been a cameraman, others had been journalists, but none had been specifically trained for the job he was now doing.

One possible means of control from outside the organisation occurs with regard to obtaining interviews with people on a particular subject. If a person does not want a subject he is concerned with to be examined, he may refuse to appear or to discuss it. This does not, however, necessarily stop the matter being discussed. Other people concerned with the matter may appear and, to counteract charges of imbalance or partiality

in the programme, the compere or reporter may announce that an opposite viewpoint had been sought from such-and-such a person but he had refused to appear. If representatives of all parties concerned in the dispute refused to appear, this still does not mean that the issue is dropped and that therefore the people concerned have control over its examination. The issue may be examined by a reporter in a direct "to camera" piece. In this, the reporter would comment on the issue rather than examine it by interviewing people concerned. Frequently people who would not, or could not, appear will be willing to give background, non-accreditable material which can be used by the reporter.

Another technical control concerns the shooting ratio. This is the ratio of film shot to film used. Thus if only half the film shot is used, the shooting ratio is 2:1 - and considered very good. Because of the continuing financial pressure, the concern is to keep shooting ratios down and thus the range of material filmed and therefore available for use is limited. Most of what is shot should be used. The Assistant Manager said that freedom of shooting ratios would vary with the type of programme involved. A news cameraman whose shooting ratio was 3:1 would not be regarded favourably but on a prestige documentary programme the shooting ratio may even go as high as 8 :1 without causing undue concern.

Thus although the Line-Up team has a definite place within a heirarchical organization, the control exercised over its final product is not really heirarchical in nature, except that problems may be moved up the heirarchy to be solved if they cannot be dealt with at the level at which they arise. Within the team the Executive Producer is more than primus inter pares but not excessively so, possibly because he is subject to controls from areas from which <sup>he</sup> theoretically holds sway. His decision making power is limited by the power of technical matters, of his raw material - the interviewees and film subjects - and of his staff, for the compere may to some extent control public relations by his own reactions and the reporters will usually only obtain information about areas into which they inquire. (The actual control may be even looser than this, for the personality of the Executive Producer may change the



seat of power within the group. Apparently the previous Executive Producer and producer had been of differing temperaments and abilities from the present two with the result that the Executive Producer tended, largely because of his inexperience in television to lean more heavily on the Producer whose experience and innovative ability was greater. The present Executive Producer had tightened his control and apparently also strengthened his team by, for instance, allowing where possible his reporters to follow their individual preferences such as for theatrical items, or parliamentary interviews, knowing that this would not only lead to better items but also to a happier and therefore more efficient staff.)

Once the material has been obtained, control over it again fails to be strictly heirarchical for instead of edicts being sent down on methods of treating material, the material may be sent up the heirarchy for decisions to be passed on it. Of course the overriding control of the Broadcasting and Television Act lurks in the background but this covers matters only in a very broad way and would appear to be no more dominant a control on those involved than most statutes are on the general public who worry about them when they have broken them or are contemplating so doing.\*

\* Since this study was completed, a major furor developed within the Line-Up production group, throwing some doubts on the team spirit mentioned. The Executive Producer resigned to run as an endorsed A.L.P. candidate at the State elections. Following his defeat, he was reinstated by the A.B.C. in his former position. Four members of the team, the Assistant Producer, the compere and two reporters, resigned claiming that having as Executive Producer a man who had declared his political stance, endangered the credibility of the programme. After much administrative consideration, including an investigation by the Commissioners, the Executive Producer was left in his position, but it was acknowledged that those who had resigned had a viable reason for so doing - they were then employed elsewhere within the A.B.C.

COMMERCIAL BROADCASTING

There are two commercial broadcasting stations in Hobart - the sole case of commercial media competition in Southern Tasmania. One is associated with the commercial television station and the newspaper company, while the other is owned jointly by members of a family associated with a music business and a large processing company. As with all Australian commercial broadcasting stations, the differences between their products are minimal, although those involved see considerable disparity. It is difficult to obtain reliable information on their ratings, but both claim great increases in revenue during the last year.

7HO, the station with the other media associations, will be dealt with first. It is owned in equal parts by Davies Bros.Ltd., proprietors of the "Mercury" and themselves part of the Herald and Weekly Times stable, by Robt.Nettlefold Pty.Ltd. and by Findlay Pty.Ltd. owned by an electrical and music business family. The combination of radio and music interests is a common one arising from an early realization that they were mutually supportive. The station company, Commercial Broadcasters Pty.Ltd., is a shareholder in Tasmanian Television Ltd., the licensee of TVT-6, and a member of the Macquarie Broadcasting Network. Despite being housed in the same building as TVT, there is little interaction between them, although more is claimed by 7HO than by the television people. As with the television station, the spatial organization of 7HO is not conducive to high morale nor to informal staff relations. However, it appears that other factors enable the influence of the building to be overcome.

The formal organization of the station is straight-forward. Under the General Manager are the continuity manager (who coordinates copy), the accountant, the programme manager and a local and national sales manager. The last two positions had previously been held by one person but when a new appointment had to be made, the General Manager was unable to choose between two staff members and appointed both. It appears that the national sales manager, who is also in charge of station promotions, acts as trouble shooter for the General Manager

who, as National Vice-President of the FACB and a member of many Federation committees, is frequently occupied with other than station concerns. It is also the national sales manager's concern to discover new ideas which he says must be valid for station use for five years, to be acceptable.

Possibly due to the large span of control of the General Manager, and the fact that there is no officially designated second in command, the style of organization tends to informality. The executive group consult one another on decisions rather than having them imposed on them from above or jealously guarding their own decision making areas. Although when policy decisions are made by the General Manager, they are definite and follow the formal chain of command, it appears that this is rather a rare occurrence. The team spirit and high morale of the station may be attributed in part to this and also to the fact that there is no pressure to appear to be working when there is really no work to be done. The other side to this latter situation is that there will be times when much is to be done and more is required of the staff than would normally be the case.

This may be occasioned by the nature of the medium which requires people to be present in case something goes wrong, such as engineers on standby, and which employs salesmen and scriptwriters whose duties demand bursts of activity rather than sustained effort. It could also be that the need to produce a relaxing, happy programme to entertain people while they work around the home or after they return from a busy day at the office, demands a relaxed, happy atmosphere at the point of origin. The breakfast and 'drive-time' programmes with many time, news, weather and road report service announcements would have to be more tense and strictly organized and it would be reasonable to assume that at such times the pressure would be greater and the formal structure more evident. The station is highly automated so that the announcer on air is able to have direct control over the programme without being directly involved in much of the spoken material.

Due to the changed nature of radio programming, most of the concern of the Control Board nowadays is with advertisements both in

their duration and content. All advertisements that originate interstate (usually Sydney or Melbourne) must be approved by the Federation and carry a stamp indicating this and the number and date of their approval. Nonetheless, all advertisements are vetted before being aired and there appears to be considerable concern over undesirable content. Sometimes a sponsor will require a certain wording that the copywriters find questionable and they will refer it to the programme manager who may reject it, alter or pass it. Occasionally he will accept an advertisement on the condition that if even one complaint is received about it, it will immediately be taken off the air without review. The voluntary code on cigarette advertising is accepted by the FACB although it is admitted to be unsatisfactory as it was designed for television. Thus, for instance, cigarettes are not advertised between 4.30 p.m. and 7.30 p.m. on weekdays as this is children's viewing time, yet this viewing pattern does not correspond with the radio audiences. WHO still abides by the code although it is not enforced by the Federation.

There exists a strong feeling of pride in their product at the station - in its technical quality and audience appeal. This is so strong that the personnel, especially the creative or higher echelon ones, become annoyed when elections are called because not only is their selling pattern disturbed, but, as one interviewee said "Our lovely air is filled with people who don't know how to use the medium". The selling pattern is disturbed particularly if an election is called suddenly because the station would be using nearly the maximum time allowed for advertisements and would have time sold for some time in advance - sometimes up to a year. The need to schedule a large number of advertisements, frequently of appalling quality, with little warning and only for a short time can create considerable problems.

Contact with the Control Board is generally by telephone - confirmed as is required within 24 hours by letter - but the station acts on the phoned directions. Usually a complaint over excessive advertising (probably the most common) will result from a 30 second advertisement running two or three seconds longer. Normally this is compensated for by others which are shorter, but if by chance three 30 second

advertisements follow one another and they all run a second or two over time, then the time allowed can be inadvertently exceeded. Any complaint is easily checked by reference to a very slow tape which runs all the time the station is on the air. This tape is kept for a week after recording, although segments about which a complaint has been made are kept until the case is cleared or explained.

One of the programmes felt to be highly important by the staff - a service programme with a high audience rating - is an hour long morning talk programme which does not use an openline talk-back format but has listeners' questions rephrased and put by studio staff. The true open line format was rejected by the management because it was felt that such a programme needed a particularly good compere and there are fewer of these than there are existing talk-back programmes and that the population was too small to provide articulate, respectable questioners day after day. The existing style allowed the questions that were asked to be put succinctly and comprehensibly by experienced announcers. Much was made of the fact that the compere of the programme was a housewife and mother with whom an audience of other housewives and mothers could identify; it was felt that she expressed their point of view as they would like to have been able to express it. She is allowed a considerable degree of freedom including that of criticising advertisers even if their advertisements are used on her show. Apparently complaints about her statements come only from those she attacks, not from her audience. The programme generally involves a guest, the compere and another interviewer who acts as a feed and poses the listeners' questions. In line with the concept of the programme as a community service, many of the guests are concerned with the building trade, or pets, or consumer protection services. Occasionally visiting people of note or controversial topics are dealt with, but the primary concerns are with local issues, matters which inescapably affect the audience, rather than with issues that make people think about new ideas.

The news service of the station comes from four main sources - by telex from 3AW (the key Macquarie Network station), by monitoring various short wave services such as the Voice of America, by contract with The Mercury and by monitoring the A.B.C.. There is also some reliance on

people phoning in stories though because of the station's well known link with The "Mercury" some people assume that by informing the latter, they have informed the station and this is not always the case. As well there is an amount of reciprocity between radio and television news teams.

There is strong emphasis on the point that the intention of the station is to make money and that to do this they must attract as large an audience as possible. There appears to be such satisfaction with the percentage of the audience held by the station that a survey has not been commissioned for ten years. Two or three years ago the station undertook a small survey itself for its own use, but as it had no personnel trained in research techniques, it did not place much credence in the results which placed the station well ahead of its competition. However, soon after, an A.B.C. survey team verified these results finding that the station had 60% of the audience and that there was little fluctuation apart from at breakfast time. The A.B.C. first network station was placed second on the survey and the other commercial station had approximately the same percentage of the audience as the A.B.C. second network station. When attempting to explain the reasons for this discrepancy between the number of listeners to the two commercial stations, the 7HO staff claim that theirs is a smoother presentation, that it is a sharper sound and that although they are allowed to programme four advertisements consecutively, they rarely use more than three. The station staff certainly do not suggest it, but another reason for their success could be that they spend more money on station promotions and competitions.

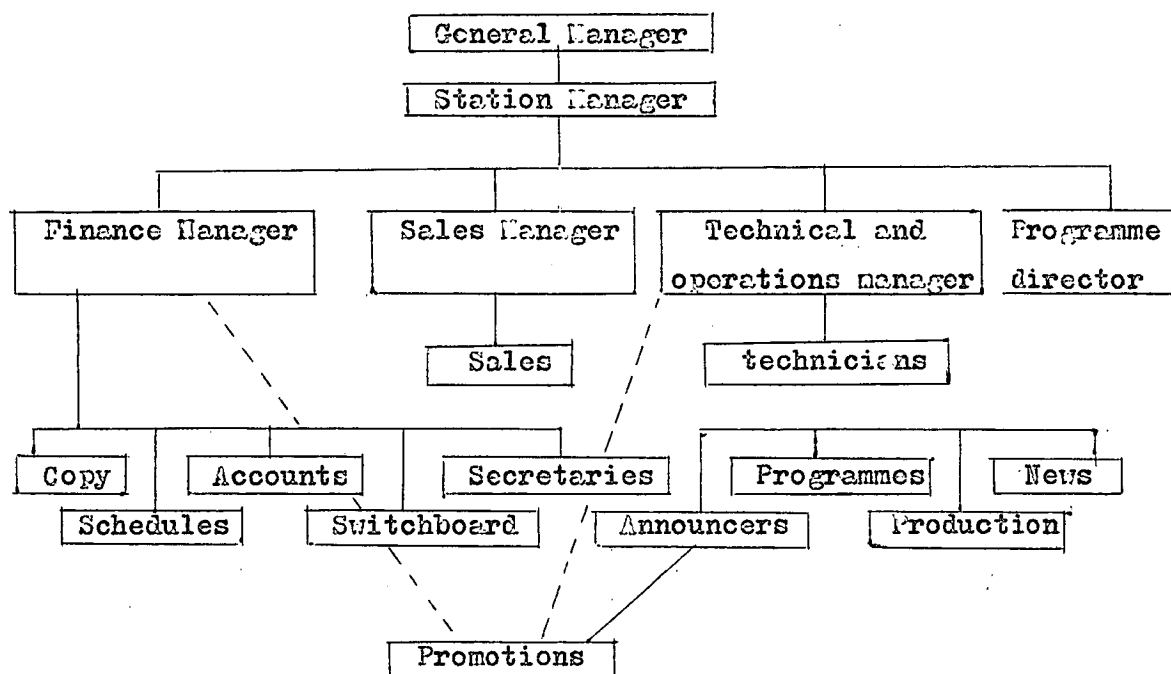
The overriding view of the station as a business enterprise also causes the response to questions about the political flavour of the station to be that they will broadcast anyone who pays for the time even if that person is a communist. Much is made of the fact that Labour MHR Ray Sherry frequently broadcasts from the station although his views are not those of management. There is however, much opposition to the calls by some parliamentarians for the introduction of a Fairness Doctrine as it is claimed that those who want it have no idea of the situation it would create. The example cited by the station staff is that an anti-

-smoking commercial or statement will have to be followed by a pro-smoking statement (although this initially ridiculous example is remarkably similar to the present cigarette advertising requirements with the pro-smoking material, the advertisement, being followed by a health warning). This intensifies the present dislike of government interference by the General Manager who is particularly upset by the unfairness of the government itself in imposing restrictions and requirements on radio and television which are not imposed on the press. Within the Federation he is working on the problem, especially that of the silent period two days prior to an election.

The government controls the station through more legislation than just the Broadcasting and Television Act; it is also controlled by the Copyright Act, the Arbitration Act, the Posts and Telegraphs Act and the Air Navigation Act (which requires periodic station identification announcements). The station itself applies the Posts and Telegraphs Act more thoroughly than is required, by its adherence to the Federation's Code of Ethics which forbids the advertising on radio of goods which cannot be sent through the mails. (It is unlikely, however, that such advertising would be able to pass the Control Board's requirements).

7HT, a member of the Major Broadcasting Network, is on the other hand more formal in its organization but it also uses the managerial group conference which meets regularly every Friday morning. The more formal nature of the station is revealed by their manning detail, a printed sheet outlining their chain of command, (see attached copy). The managerial group discuss problems until a majority decision is reached. The General Manager has foregone his power to make dictatorial decisions because he believes that the democratic style of management is not only particularly suited to media organizations, but that it is a very good method of training a future top management.

Not being connected with a television station, 7HT is more conscious of competition between the media and when voicing the familiar complaint about the restrictions placed on the electronic media that are not placed on the press, the General Manager continued by saying that the restrictions placed on advertisements of a medical nature



7HT's Planning Detail as of 28th February 1972



nature apply more harshly to radio than to television. The latter can use visual material to overcome some of the prohibitions by, for instance, setting an advertisement in clinical surroundings to give it greater legitimacy. Generally there are highly amicable relationships with the Board whose representatives are said to be easily accessible and fair. The situation whereby some Board members are drawn from the industry itself is also regarded as leading to greater satisfaction by the media generally with the Board's activities.

The General Manager has considerable day-to-day control probably because the station is quite small. He deals with any complaints, and tries to foresee any that may occur; any advertisements about which the staff are doubtful are vetted by him and at times he checks on the availability of the advertised products so that the station does not receive complaints that it is promoting goods that cannot be obtained. All advertisements that are broadcast must be checked through although usually this is done by staff members who are aware of the General Manager's dislikes, such as too many superlatives, as well as the basic requisites of good taste and the importance of honesty to client and to public.

Because half of the shares are held by the McCann family (the other half are held by Jones & Co.) who are well known Roman Catholics, and they comprise half the board of directors and one family member is the station manager, 7HT is frequently accused of religious and political bias. This charge is emphatically rejected by the station staff and announcers are forbidden to reveal personal opinions on such matters. It is emphasised that although the epilogue is given each night by a Catholic priest, (who is incidentally one of the few local religious men with any popular appeal), the Sunday morning religious sessions represent every shade of religion apart from Roman Catholic. It should also be pointed out that the station carries the Garner Ted Armstrong "World Tomorrow" religious broadcasts on a daily basis as well. The General Manager refutes charges of political bias by saying that he is aware of many local government scandals which he will not comment on or break because he does not believe that a position in charge of a radio station entitles him to attack existing authorities. He is very

concerned with the amount of conflict aroused or intensified by the media which could as easily ease it, and waxes quite irate about the tendency of some media organizations to increase their ratings, circulation or revenue by their news broadcasts which are made highly sensational and frequently cause unhappiness or tension. The intensity of his belief on this point must influence the style of the news broadcast by his station. The news sources are the Herald-Sun news service for overseas and interstate news, combined with local news from a number of stringers, station staff and the "Mercury" midnight service.

In contrast to 7HO, 7HT does use the open-line format for its talk-back programme. They claim that far from being too few callers, they have far too many and never yet has the 'panic button' had to be used to remove an offensive caller. A doctor is a frequent guest on the open line programme giving free medical advice to callers. The General Manager believes that this programme would have the highest rating of any programme in Southern Tasmania, although again there is no survey to support this claim. Hardly surprisingly, he rejects the findings of the A.B.C. survey largely because of the method used to determine the results. He measures the success of his station by the annual turnover and is very satisfied.

The organization of commercial radio is without doubt the most informal of all media investigated. It does not have the technical exigencies of television nor the deadline pressures and traditional staff relations of the press nor does it have the solemn duties and responsibilities to government officials of the A.B.C. It does not demand a large staff to operate, indeed for some time the Tasmanian West Coast station 7QT was operated by one man who was station manager, announcer, technician and salesman all by himself. The stations have a basic concept of their duty being to serve the community by entertaining, diverting, giving essential information and acting as an unofficial ombudsman, social worker, neighbourhood gossip and friend in the morning women's talk programmes.

The Control Board survey of the composition of metropolitan commercial broadcasting stations for November 1970 and May 1971 combined,

revealed the comparative importance of the various types of radio programmes. Light and popular music occupied 49.7% of the time, advertisements 15.4%, news 10.5%, sport 6.3%, religious, social and political material 5.8%, family and children 1.8%, information 1.4%, all other entertainment 1.6%, and the remaining 7.5% was filled with incidental matter such as announcer's chatter. The talk programmes have been included in whichever classification it was felt that their content placed them. Thus almost half of the time on the air is composed of playing recorded music and there is little need for a rigid formal organization structure to control this.

The basic method of control over what is broadcast is by way of the daily log which must be made up in advance and checked as the announcer follows it while on the air. Each advertisement, record, announcement or competition is logged so that virtually all the announcer has to do is follow the instructions and punch the right buttons. The major purpose of the log is to ensure that all the advertisements for which time has been sold are in fact broadcast and in the optimum order. It is certainly not desirable for rival products or services to be advertised consecutively.

The programmes which cannot so closely follow a log, such as the talk programmes, generally have a higher echelon executive in close association with the announcer/compere. At 7HO the second interviewer and feed is the programme manager while at 7HT the tape delay check is monitored at times by the General Manager. Apart from this and the actual compilation of logs, the station staff is concerned with the main object of the business - making money through advertising. With commercial radio, the staff can be much more open about the primacy of this goal than can the television people who, because of the severely limited number of licences and the fears about the influence of television on an unsuspecting and gullible populace have to espouse more strongly the public service, inform and educate goals, or than can the press with its heritage of being an information service and its concentration on supposedly impartial news. The differences between 7HO and 7HT may largely be differences in size - with HT being smaller, the General Manager can have more direct control than can his more frequently <sup>otherwise</sup> occupied counterpart at 7HO.

SECTION 4COMMERCIAL TELEVISION

TVE-6, the sole commercial television station serving Hobart and the south of Tasmania, commenced operations on the fourth of June, 1960. In the application for a licence the unique nature of the proposed station had been pointed out - it would be serving a significantly smaller population than any of the existing stations, the terrain made reception far more difficult and advertising revenue expected would be unable to support a station of the type already established in Sydney and Melbourne. The company formed had an authorized capital of £500,000 despite advice from the other Australian television companies that this would be insufficient (the company was following primarily American examples and believed that it did have enough).

At the time of the application only signatory shares had been issued and these were held in trust for Robt. Nettlefold Pty. Ltd., Davies Bros. Ltd. (proprietors of the Mercury) and Commercial Broadcasters Pty. Ltd.. The latter was the licensee of radio station 7HO and was owned in equal thirds by Davies Bros. Ltd., Robt. Nettlefold Pty. Ltd. and Pindlays Pty. Ltd.. Nettlefolds at this time held shares in Associated Pulp and Paper Mills Ltd., Humes Ltd., and Kingston Beach Golf Links Ltd.; Davies Bros. also had shares in Associated Pulp and Paper Mills Ltd. as well as in Australian Newsprint Mills Ltd., Australian Associated Press Pty. Ltd., Australian Paper Manufacturers Ltd., Tasmanian Containers Ltd. and the Tasmanian Press Association; Commercial Broadcasters had a small shareholding in Macquarie Broadcasting Service Pty. Ltd.. A prospectus was issued on March 23, 1959, for the original three shareholders intended to retain only a maximum of 30% of the shares, and the first Board of Directors comprised G.F. Davies, L. Nettlefold, L.G. Murdoch, E.G. McRae and Sir Geoffrey Walch. Other companies in which the Board members held directorships included Australian Newsprint Mills Ltd., Tasmanian Finance and Agency Co. Ltd., Australian General Insurance Co. Ltd., Tasmanian Containers Pty. Ltd., Wm. Crosby and Co. (Tas.) Pty. Ltd., Frank Hammond (Hobart) Pty. Ltd., Frank Hammond (Launceston) Pty. Ltd., Hobart Mutual Permanent Investment Building Society,

McGowans Holdings Pty.Ltd., Macquarie Broadcasting Service Pty.Ltd., J.Walch & Sons Pty.Ltd., Oldham, Beddome and Meredith Pty.Ltd., J.C. McPhoe and Co.Pty.Ltd., National Executors and Trustees Co.Ltd. and three directors (G.F.Davies, L.Nettlefold and L.G.Murdoch) were on the Board of Davies Bros.itself. (When later J.T.Wertheimer joined the board of TVT, he also was a director of Davies Bros. as well as of J. Walch and Sons Pty.Ltd., Tasmanian Finance and Agency Co.Ltd. and The Australian Mutual Provident Society).

Financially, TVT had a very good start because for two years there was no other commercial channel in Tasmania and it received all the state's advertising appropriation. Now there is competition from TNT-9- the Examiner station in Launceston. This competition has not prevented TVT from having a shareholding in Northern Television Ltd., nor the Examiner from having a shareholding in TVT. Other significant shareholdings in TVT now are owned by Associated Broadcasting Services Ltd. and Metropolitan Broadcasting Pty.Ltd.. This has been merely following the pattern of media groups taking out shareholdings in other media groups, providing an interlocking interest group. Tasmanian Television Ltd. itself has engaged in this practice having shareholdings in CTC Canberra, WEN Upper Namoi, NRN Grafton-Kempsey, DDQ Darling Downs, SAS Adelaide, SES South-East South Australia, TVW Perth and radio stations 6LK, 6BY, 6MD, 6WB, and 4BH. It also has shares in Macquarie Broadcasting Holdings Ltd. and Associated Broadcasting Services Ltd.

Although at first this was the result of a deliberate policy of investment, particularly in television stations, this policy has been dropped as television ceases to be as profitable an investment as it was at first believed to be. There are many factors involved in this, only some of which apply to all stations but one of the major ones is the existence of the third commercial channel in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, and Adelaide. None of these stations has managed to break even, some have up to a \$10,000,000 loss, but their effects are wide-reaching. Advertisers have to decide whether to spend their advertising appropriation on the three metropolitan stations or over one or two metropolitan stations and the rural areas. Even if they attempt to

spread it over all stations for a truly national coverage, it is still spread very thinly indeed - certainly far more so than was envisaged in the original plans for commercial television. As if this by itself were not enough, the actual advertising appropriations of the various manufacturers have been cut over the last two years due largely to uncertainties over the state of the economy.

TVT believes that it has almost reached saturation point with its local audience and sources of revenue and so must diversify its interests to maintain a satisfactory profit margin. Originally it had been hoped that the company would be able to take up a second television licence as at first it was entitled to do, a move which would have helped significantly in the economic operation of the company, but it has been prevented from so doing by moves entirely out of its control. The Herald and Weekly Times transactions which acquired a controlling interest in Davies Bros., the largest of the TVT shareholders, effectively made TVT part of the Herald and Weekly Times stable of stations as far as the provisions of the Broadcasting and Television Act are concerned. Consequently TVT could not acquire another licence. As Davies Bros. Shareholding is only approximately 12% of TVT, the Herald and Weekly Times does not have direct control over the operations of the station, but it is interesting to speculate on what could happen, as it has a majority control of Davies Bros. and Davies Bros. directors comprise more than half the TVT Board.

Because of the limitations on its profitability, TVT has moved into other fields related in some way to its own. It now has a 50% holding in Tasmanian Drive-In-Theatre Holdings, its own servicing company (which has proved far more profitable than expected and will be the means through which TVT hopes to profit through the eventual introduction of video-cassettes) and is venturing into entrepreneurial activities. The Planning and Development Manager is constantly investigating areas to develop or in which to invest.

Board meetings are held nine or ten times a year, showing that while the Directors certainly regard their position as more than merely a nominal one, they are not concerned with attempting to exercise close control. It appears that considerable power has developed on the

station manager as the Managing Director has become more involved with the activities of the subsidiary and associated companies. The Managing Director and the Planning and Development Manager have both been with the company since its incorporation (the latter was originally chief engineer) both appear to have moved more to consideration of the company than of the station itself. In fact, the Managing Director freely admits that should, for instance, a problem over the use of a particular segment of film of possibly controversial character arise, he would do his best to avoid being involved, considering it to be a matter for the station manager to decide. Both the Managing Director and the Planning and Development Manager are involved in preparing for the advent of colour television because the cost, which no calculations can bring below \$1 million, although this would not all have to be found at once, will have to be obtained in the main from sources other than the ordinary station income. Colour preparation alone is one of the causes of the need to diversify, for development money must come from outside. Quite a deal of preparation has already been completed - the new building and an amount of the necessary equipment are ready, indeed all the equipment bought in the last two years has been for colour as well as black and white. There is what amounts to almost a sorrowing acceptance of the need for colour, the extra interest and involvement that colour will bring will not go anywhere near to compensating for the much higher costs not only of installation but also of operation and there is a definite fear that the government will set a date by which all stations must be televising in colour rather than a date on which stations may begin to convert.

The staff of the station number approximately 87 and the day-to-day operations are under the control of the Station manager who has held the position for eight years, who claims to run the station by the "seat of his pants" and to disregard research and viewing statistics if he "knows" otherwise. Under him are the accountant, the sales manager, the production manager, the office manager and the news editor. Although on matters of wide importance these five people act as an executive advisory group, it appears that rarely are all concerned for only those directly involved in a problem advise the station manager on it. The

station manager claims to have great freedom of action, having to abide by only three directives of the Board. He confessed to two of these - to stay out of trouble and to make a profit. He does the buying of programmes and admitted to some distaste at what was available, saying that he could choose between American programmes produced for Americans, British programmes produced for the British and cops-and-robbers programmes produced, as far as he could tell, for no-one at all. Despite the last statement, the channel shows four Australian produced crime programmes which have considerable popularity.

The station does not have any employees who engage in research, occasionally a mainland research company will send a team over, but the station manager believes that Tasmania correlates reasonably well with Melbourne and research reports of some kind seem to arrive almost every day. Since the commencement of operations there has been a decline in the demand for local production which at the beginning was considerable. Now apart from all important news and sport, there is only a current affairs programme (1 hour weekly) and short children's and afternoon women's programmes. The lack of local research information does not prevent the station manager from making statements about local preferences and there is no reason to doubt his beliefs for the station is popular, although without any opposition apart from the A.B.C., it would attract the majority who do not like the A.B.C. without any great difficulty.

The station has frequently been used as a medium on which to test new advertising campaigns, largely because there is no competition from other commercial stations. The highly successful initial Cambridge cigarette promotions launched by Rothmans was tested through TVT. Although most of the commercials used in the daily operation of the station are from national campaigns and therefore usually made in Sydney or Melbourne, there is scope for local production of commercials. The two Tasmanian advertising agencies use the station's production facilities and often its staff as well. The station also makes commercials itself, having a Commercial Production Department under the production manager, working in close association with the sales manager. Production facilities, in the Planning and Development Manager's opinion, are necessarily above world standards for a station of its size and audience because alter-



-native facilities are not easy of access.

The News Department consists of five graded journalists (including the News Editor), two interviewers, two cameramen (with another two available if needed) and one film cutter who does not work full time with the department. The News Editor has only held the position for one year, after working for 29 years on a newspaper. Unlike the A.B.C. newsroom, this department prepares only the television news, although a radio station is associated with the channel and is, in fact, in the same building. The News Editor claims to be aware of the daily radio news, however, insofar as he sees the need to alter the presentation of stories that have already received considerable exposure during the day on radio news services.

The News Editor believes that it is necessary that the news entertain as well as inform and to this end he regards as particularly important overseas news of human interest and local service items. The international film comes from the same sources as the A.B.C.'s - CBS and Visnews - but the interstate visual clips come from Melbourne's Channel 7, while there is an interstate telex link with the Macquarie News Service. The link with Channel 7 is only to be expected since this is the Herald and Weekly Times station, however for a considerable time the station took the Channel 9 news service. The News Editor sees an amount of rivalry with the A.B.C. news, although the TWT news has the larger audience and the most recent figures (an Anderson Analysis survey taken in June 1971) showed 42,000 people watching the TWT 6.30 p.m. news. He claimed that his station's news was livelier than the A.B.C.'s, that it had more items, more local film and shorter less detailed interviews. This latter appeared very important, for the News Editor believed that the long involved interviews on the A.B.C. news bored people and was a major factor in their preference for TWT.

The News Department also produces a weekly one-hour current affairs programme called Smith's Weekly. This is regarded as a service feature to interest the community, to have much variety and to be predominately local. It is not made all at once but in segments during the week as people and film become available. Amounts of interstate and overseas material are used but there is no set proportion of local material and

it varies greatly from week to week. However, when a choice is to be made, the local story will always win over the interstate or international. Ideas for the segments come from many sources, all unofficial such as taxi-drivers, office staff and even phone calls from the public complaining about the absence of sewerage or the state of the roads. The prerecorded programme is always viewed in its entirety by the News Editor and frequently by the Station Manager to whom all problems of controversiality are referred. Never has any problem had to be referred higher, but the programme does not aim to be controversial. The Managing Director claims that TWT is the only station in Australia of comparable size producing a local one-hour current affairs programme of this type. He says that for other similar stations the relaying of capital city programmes or the screening of videotapes of them, is a viable proposition, not only economically but because of a certain amount of interest in state affairs. For Tasmania however, not only is the material not often of local interest, but also the costs of hiring the cable to Melbourne from the P.M.G. - to give immediacy to compensate for the lack of local stories - is prohibitive. Apparently, in the early and more profitable days of the Station's operation an offer was made to the P.M.G. for the hire of the cable for a certain number of hours a week. The P.M.G. refused, either because it considered the offer too low or for policy reasons and the Managing Director admits to being relieved at this now for no longer would the station find this arrangement economically desirable. The Smith's Weekly programme itself is only just surviving for such programmes are expensive and do not seem to have much popularity. Perhaps documentary/current affairs addicts are more likely to be A.B.C. viewers.

It is obvious that the station feels its position with regard to the A.B.C. rather strongly. It is in the unique position of being a capital city station with only the A.B.C. as opposition and in many ways it is forced into an inferior situation by the sheer size of the A.B.C. operation and its financing by the Federal Government. The 87 employees must produce a service to rival that produced by the over 200 employees of the A.B.C. working in television (the actual number is difficult to assess as unlike TWT many of the A.B.C. staff work in both radio and television.) The A.B.C. has a nationwide organization and a large central

office to which it can refer any of its problems 'should it so wish. The A.B.C. does not have to abide by the same rules as those laid down in the Act for the commercial stations and the Australian Broadcasting Control Board has only advisory powers over its programming. The Managing Director, and presumably many of his staff, feel very strongly that this is unfair, saying that the A.B.C. screens certain programmes at a time when if a commercial station did so it would be severely criticised by the Board. It is rather difficult to think of precise examples of this apart from the series of Step toe and Son broadcast at 8.00 p.m. - always a source of annoyance to the commercial stations because it was one of the first A.B.C. programmes to show up strongly in the popularity ratings and caused figures in commercial television to charge the A.B.C. with wrongly seeking to compete for the same viewers as the commercial channels.

It is difficult to account for the considerable bitterness shown, particularly by those involved in the day-to-day operations, for there appears no doubt that TVT is more popular than the A.B.C. with the majority of the community and the A.B.C. does nothing to interfere with TVT's advertising revenue, nor does the A.B.C. consider itself in competition with the channel. Perhaps it all rests on the sneaking suspicion that life is easier for the other lot and possibly, though there is no Tasmanian research basis for this conjecture, the belief that most AB class viewers, who would be prime advertising targets as well as market leaders, prefer watching the A.B.C..

In attempting to draw some conclusions about the nature of the control exercised at TVT, one has to rely to some extent on impressions. It appears that much power is in the hands of the station manager who is reluctant to lose any or even to admit to delegating any. Having been in his position for eight years he has had plenty of time to draw a significant amount of control over the organization into his personal orbit. During the period in which he has been station manager, the company has found it necessary to diversify its interests and has used to investigate and administer these new interests the two men who have been with the company since its incorporation and are either in positions of power over him or on an equal level. Thus they have been too busy with

other matters to interfere with his operations.

His reluctance to use the executive advisory group for much apart from a source of information and even then <sup>only</sup> to use those members directly involved, is but one sign of his penchant for an authoritarian form of management. It is interesting to note in this regard that the Managing Director, when asked about the esprit de corp of the staff at first said that he felt they were a reasonably united group with an apparently high level of team spirit, but on reflection said he had nothing on which to base this and in fact expressed some doubt as to its actually being the case; the only possible examples of team spirit he could cite appeared to be a high degree of knowledge of the local gossip, which is not really relevant to high staff morale. The design of the building itself, with considerable distances between various work groups, would not aid a cohesive situation and would necessitate a more rigid control structure. Other indicators of his style of control are his outspoken disregard for empirical evidence, which does not prevent his using figures and viewing statistics when they serve to support his current statements, and his cynical attitude to his station's audience. This is not to say that a degree of scepticism towards the public's opinions and towards the results of audience surveys is not a worthwhile managerial attitude, but the rather blatant opportunism reflected in his remarks does tend to support the belief that the station manager would not allow anyone or anything to encroach upon the areas of authority he had acquired for himself, if there was anything he could do to prevent it.

The News Editor seemed also to follow this pattern of control, although it is noticeable that in a comparatively small concern such as this, once a system of managerial behaviour has been established, particularly at the top, then it is followed throughout the organization. The informality characteristic of small news teams militates against its being as rigidly structured, however, as does the shorter tenure of the News Editor and his having to perform duties which would not be his in a larger news room, such as all the subbing.

Both the Managing Director and the Planning and Development Manager seem to have removed themselves largely from direct day-to-

-day control. This seems to have coincided with or brought about somewhat of a disillusionment with the present state of television. They share a nostalgia for the 'old days' when things were both more exciting and more informal. Possibly the dream has turned sour.

In attempting to draw conclusions about the control of the mass media in Australia, one is forced to recognize that few general ones can be drawn, for not only are the different media differently affected, but the situation itself is changing particularly with regard to the unofficial and informal controls. However there appears at first to be one factor which influences the control and this is the fact that all the media in Australia are supposed to be under only minimal control and that little existing only in Acts of Parliament. Thus it is that owners, editors, journalists, sales managers, any one in fact working in the media, seem to reject any suggestion that they have any control over their product. If one was to believe all the disclaimers one hears, one would be at a loss to understand how any media manager to exist, let alone appear regularly. The popular belief that the media are objective, unbiased and print all the news that's fit to print, or that they should be so, seems to have affected the operators in the media to such an extent that they fear an admission of having the power to control their paper or radio or television station would mark them as distorters of the truth. This fear makes it very difficult to discover the real situation, how the mass media are in fact controlled in ways other than legislatively. Even legislative controls seem to be enforced only when no other course of action is at all possible and some public move has to be made.

The only control which is freely admitted to and reasonably rigidly followed, is that imposed by the laws against defamation, obscenity, blasphemy and sedition and it is likely that this is because these are not laws aimed only at the media, they apply to the public at large. The semi-legal control of D notices lacks this respectability, so it is rarely admitted to, or may even be denied. The attitude to censorship is equivocal for while it does infringe the freedom of the press (and other media) it is applied more stringently to the mass media than it is to films and books which can more rightly be considered minority media. Within the mass media it is applied more stringently to the electronic media and it seems possible that this is in line with recent changes in the attitudes to censorship. The belief

that people should be within certain limits free to choose what they want to see or read, the acceptance of a plurality of community attitudes, leads to the belief that people can make an active choice to expose themselves to material that could prove offensive to some. Thus the deciding point seems to be the paying out of money and as one buys a newspaper one makes a decision to have a particular one, presumably in some knowledge of the type of paper it is. With the electronic media on the other hand the paying out of money is for a receiver not for the contents and censorship here is more stringent because people could be inadvertently exposed to sights and sounds they would find offensive. There is also the more frequently cited reason that small children could have access to hard core pornography without their parent's knowledge.

Even using the statement in the first chapter that controls are effective insofar as they facilitate the achievement of the goals of the organization it is difficult to discover the goals that do this, other than by surmise, because again there is confusion about what are and what should be the goals of the organization. The basic goal of a capitalist enterprise, to make a profit, is only admitted to somewhat shamefacedly, and always mitigated by statements about community service, about providing the housewife with information through advertisements and about serving democracy by letting the electors know what their representatives are doing. Even with the A.B.C. it is confusing to discover the goals for they change with the situation and the major goal at the moment seems to be to succeed in staying out of trouble and the public eye. Obviously at the moment in this regard the controls are not effective.

The role of the audience in all this is clear if often mistaken. The actual views of the audience apart from when they are acting as a sample in a rating survey are of little import, but the picture of the audience, whether true or false, held by people working within the media, is the springboard off which sooner or later all ideas have to bounce. The belief that the audience would disappear if it were admitted that the views of the medium appeared in places other than those marked

editorial, controls the fierce rejection of such a suggestion whenever it is put up, and the belief that the audience want to see more and more crime dramas controls the increasing number of these programmes being produced. Whether these are backed by evidence or simply an editor's personal opinion is immaterial, they are controls, and they are ones that are conceded, for the wishes of the audience are the most powerful legitimising force in the world of the mass media men.

'What the public wants' is important to all levels of a media organization, the higher ones fearing that if the public does not get what it wants, it will cease to buy or attend and then the profits will fall, and the lower levels fearing that if they do not produce what the public wants their superiors will be dissatisfied and sack the offenders. However other factors are not as all pervasive in their influence, concern about displeasing the advertisers affects only those directly concerned with this, they may in turn try to affect others but this is only an indirect control. Concern about offending sources is important to the journalist but rarely to his superiors who may be more concerned with not breaching the Defamation Act. The proprietor's concern with profit only affects others by having related to their fear of being out of a job.

In fact it appears possible that what is controlling the Australian mass media, the common bond of all the disparate controls, is fear. This may sound rather extreme but it is the one overriding characteristic of all that has been studied. There is a widespread fear about the power of the mass media and this lies behind most of the Government controls and attempts at unofficial intervention. There is little the Government can do to limit the power of the press, but generally with a Liberal government, the press is supportive anyway. The government, however, makes no attempt to weaken the power of the tradition of impartial, objective reporting and insists on it to almost impossible degrees in its instrumentality, the A.B.C. because this is one of the few controls over the activity of the press and while it hampers favourable comment at times, it also hampers unfavourable.

When television was about to be introduced, there was much public



discussion about the effects it would have and the harm it could do, and this strengthened the power of the Government to impose controls over the new medium. The introduction had been postponed for so long that the would-be licensees, fearing that they would not be granted licences because of the extent of public concern, were willing to accept the controls placed on them by the Government. The situation with radio was not quite the same, because it was not thought that there was much of a future for the medium, and once the Government obtained the frequencies it wanted for its own use, it lost most of its interest. Radio is still not subject to many controls that are not the result of treating it in a similar fashion to television. The Broadcasting Programme Standards were only devised after television ones were produced.

Because the Government sees the A.B.C. as an extension of itself and a body that should therefore reflect Government policy or at least do nothing to discredit it, it tends to interfere more readily here. It fears that the A.B.C. will harm its relations with foreign powers (the Intertel and Bidault cases), with powerful pressure groups (the RSL), with the public (the revelations about Post Office operations) and with the States (the <sup>P</sup> suppression of the programme on aboriginal assimilation). The A.B.C. accepts these pressures because it fears its finances will be cut and the higher staff whose appointment must be ratified by the Commissioners' (political appointees all) fear that they will lose their jobs.

The media barons fear, not only, as has been mentioned, that the public will find out that they have a control over their businesses and because they are of the special variety, media organizations, object to continuing to support them, but also that the public or the Broadcasting Control Board will discover the real extent of their holdings, and agitate for them to be reduced either by making the Control provisions of the Broadcasting and Television Act retroactive or by enacting stricter monopoly legislation.

The Broadcasting Control Board was established at the time when the introduction of television was first being considered and it

appeared obvious that radio was a powerful and successful medium and many more applications for licences were being made. However with the change from a Labour to a Liberal Government, it was feared that the Control Board would hinder private enterprise, so it was never accorded the strength it needed to operate according to its function under the Act. It was however seen as a useful weapon against the commercial media's offending the public. Thus the main function of the Control Board today, with licensing, in which the role of the Board was often abrogated by the Government, becoming less important as there are fewer licences to distribute and the important ones in the capital cities all securely held, is to ensure that the public are not annoyed by too many advertisements all at once or by hearing or seeing distasteful things.

To assume that fear is behind the control of the mass media in Australia is not to say that it is the control or is even recognized as being behind such controls as exist. What it does say is that fear is the motivating factor behind the controls that are imposed, or the attempts at imposing them, and that possibly because fear is at the root of the controls people are reluctant to admit to imposing any. To some extent this negates the assumption of the General Theory chapter that needs are the motivating force and to some extent the fears are reflections of the needs - fear of losing a job is but another way of expressing a need to have security of employment. Nonetheless, it appears more realistic to express the motivation in fear terms, because this is how most examples of control in the Australian context appear.

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